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COMPUTER & ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT

APRIL 1988

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COMPETITION RULES
The Editor's decision is final in all matters relating to adjudication and while we offer prizes in good faith, believing them to be available, if something untoward happens (like a game that has been offered as a prize being scrapped) we reserve the right to substitute prizes of comparable value. We'll do our very best to despatch prizes as soon as possible after the published closing date. Winners names will appear in a later issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. No correspondence can be entered into regarding the competitions (unless we've written to you stating that you have won a prize and it doesn't turn up, in which case drop Frances Mable a line at the PO Box 10 address). No person who has any relationship, no matter how remote, to anyone who works for either Newsfield or any of the companies offering prizes, may enter one of our competitions.

COVER DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER FREY

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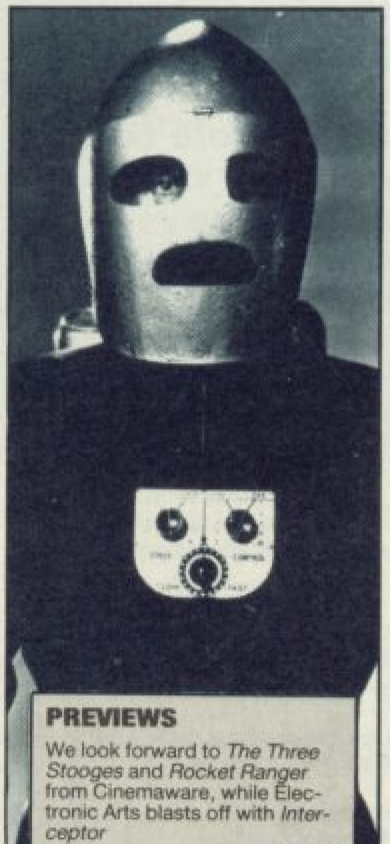
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TGM 006 (May) is on sale at all good newsagents from April 21. Sales have increased dramatically since TGM 003, so order from your newsagent now or you may miss out!

READERPAGE

This month you have kindly written in on a wide variety of subjects, from multi–load cassette-based software to modems. We thoroughly enjoy reading your letters and are only sorry that we do not have room to print them all. If you can't resist the urge to drop us a line and air whatever you feel needs airing, please address your communication to: READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*

MAGAZINE RACK

Dear Games Machine
I used to read C&VG, until I read THE GAMES MACHINE, to which I quickly subscribed in Issue Three. I have now found out that there is a competition to win an Amiga, but to my dismay it said that the answers were to be found in the previous issues (one, two and three) of which I only have Three. I have racked my brains and the stores trying to find where copies are to be found. Please tell me if there are to be any back issues, if so how do I obtain them and at what cost.
Carl Horland, Egham, Surrey

From TGM006 there will be a back numbers offer, but so you can enter the Amiga Competition, you can already write and request the issues you want, using the mail order address, enclosing payment of £1.50 per issue to cover postage.

ANYTHING YOUR'S CAN DO . . .

Dear Games Machine
I would like to take this opportunity as an ST and Amiga owner to reply to Jonathan Holloway's letter in TGM004 (March).

I am a games player and, like Jonathan, I wanted to upgrade from Spectrum to Atari ST. How wrong I was, because very soon I realised that the ST was not so hot on the games side. What I mean is that although the ST can have nice graphics, it is not great at animating them (eg *Enduro Racer*), also the sound quality is very much like the 128K Spectrum. The best sound it manages is digitised, which eats up memory enormously (even with compression routines).

Now if, on the other hand, you saved up for a bit longer and bought an Amiga 500 you would realise, as I have, that the ST is a box of nothing! The Amiga has a graphic system that puts the ST to shame and a sound chip that is only equalled by top quality synthesisers. There is a blitter chip to speed up repeated graphic functions and wait for this; the Amiga is stereo. Now don't let an ST owner or salesman in a shop sway your mind by saying, 'there's a blitter chip coming out soon' or 'just wait till AMY comes along (sound)'. That is what got me to blow all my savings on an ST. I bought mine in May 1987 and I am still waiting for them.

I have since been told that the AMY is only for 'top of the range oh God look at the price' STs only, and the blitter will mean the majority of all games released will not work. To add to the argument, Atari have recently upgraded their TOS which has brought with it many more incompatibilities. (Just read recent computer press to see how angry new owners are). How often do you see Amiga owners writing in this much?

As to TGM being less formal . . . DON'T YOU DARE! The bulk of readers like it just the way it is.

A big cop out is the idea of a POKEs section; if we double precious space to this then you'll soon notice that chunks of the magazine will deteriorate and you'll get fed up with the ST and Amiga games that you paid £20-£30 for and all because a cheat mode made it too easy for you.

Better to include a play by mail section. There are some excellent PBM games out there that many people don't know about. I'd say that many people who have not got a computer will buy this publication for PBM reviews, previews and tips.
Jason Shipman, South Wirral, Cheshire

Without wishing to convey bias on either ST or Amiga, they both have features which make them capable of supporting outstanding software. TGM feels that the two computers are good for each other, competition never hurt anybody and can only instil an urge to create better and better games for both.

No comment on cheat modes, but a PBM section is planned.

CARTOON TIME

Dear Games Machine
Now that TGM has been successfully launched I would like to comment on how it could be improved (albeit only slightly).

I am happy to see the Adventure Column (by Rob Steel), but where is the helpline? I had always thought that the two ran side by side. After all, competitor mags have helplines, so how how about one in the future?

Now to comic strips. Why doesn't TGM start a comic strip such as Jetman and King Grub in CRASH? (The totally unfunny Mercy Dash by Mel Croucher doesn't count.)

Umquat the Alien (the ex-LM strip) would be ideal for injecting a little humour into the magazine. Think about it. The final suggestion is for a TGM binder. CRASH has a blue one (a binder I mean!), whilst ZZAP's is red and the one for AMTIX! was green (ish). TGM's should be white or black.
Phil Latham, Macclesfield, Cheshire

Our resident man of Steel would dearly love to include a help line – he's working out how to present it now. As for comic strips, if you peruse this issue carefully you will notice the inclusion of Cutey-Poo and his hilarious exploits. And from TGM006 you will have the chance to send for a brilliant binder (not white or black, but lavish leather-look) in which to safely keep your copies.

THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

Dear Games Machine
Software houses, please can we have more programs that use MIDI ports and allow you to connect more than one ST together. The only program/game I am aware of that does this is *Midi Maze* by Hybrid Arts. This program allows you to connect up to 16 STs together.

Three friends and I recently bought a MIDI lead each, they cost us £3 a piece. The four of us got together with our STs, connected them and spent the whole evening playing *Midi Maze*. We had a brilliant time.

The possibilities for games, whether they be RPG, arcade, simulations, strategy, or adventures must be endless. The beauty of *Midi Maze* is that even if you can't get any friends together you can still play the computer on your own.
David Somen, Castle Bromwich, B'ham

Flight Simulator II *from Sublogic allows players to 'fly' by connecting two Atari STs together, we know of no other at present. Perhaps software houses look on it as a loss of potential sales if one program can be played by a number of users rather than them having to buy a copy of the game each. Have you noticed the price of* Midi Maze*?*

PROUD OWNER

Dear Games Machine
I must congratulate you on your excellent and most interesting article on Rare in TGM004 (March). I am the proud owner of a Nintendo system and think that it is the best thing to come over to Britain for many years. After reading this article I wondered if there was any way to get my hands on one of those marvellous Nintendo magazines, I also would like to know if there are any plans to produce a Nintendo magazine in Britain. Thank you again for that wonderful article.
Paul Bedser, Ropley, Hants

You would be very lucky to get your hands on one of the Japanese magazines! Perhaps Mattel could help put you in touch. As for a British version; there is insufficient Nintendo software backup at present to support such a project. But perhaps not for much longer.

MARVELLOUS SCREENSHOTS

Dear Games Machine
I loved your interview with Rare and marvelled at some of the screenshots. Having a Nintendo myself I thought nothing could possibly surpass *Super Mario Bros* but from the shot of *Wizards And Warriors* I was wrong. Please could you print some more screenshots. Will they be producing cartridges for the UK market?

I do have one complaint, (a very minor one), there just aren't enough Amstrad reviews.

Apart from that small complaint you have produced the best ever computer magazine to hit Britain, blowing *C&VG* right off the shelves.
W Matthews, Chichester, W Sussex

The games highlighted in the Rare feature, along with many more, will eventually become available to the UK market, although we have no precise date as yet.

A MUG'S GAME

Dear Games Machine
First, can I have a quick dig at John Vincent (Readerpage TGM003)? He says: 'As one of your older readers (I am 25) . . .'. Cor, Mabel, fetch me my invalid chair! I may not be twice his age, but I could count the difference between my age, and twice his, without taking off my shoes – and I'd still have my thumbs free for twiddling. Still, I'm not going to claim anything on that basis, because I'm sure there are some out there who could say



the same about me.

More seriously, there's Ron J Handy's question: 'Why can't we have pictures with MUGs?' Maybe I should declare an interest – I prefer text adventures myself, with graphics restricted to arcade-ish games – but the real answer to his question is more technical than one of preference. There are two basic problems: lack of a standard for transmitting high-resolution multi-colour computer graphics, and limitations of current (home-price) communications systems. Neither of these problems is absolutely insurmountable (we have the technology) but at the present state of the art, the answers are a bit out of the range of the normal home budget (thousands or tens of thousands of pounds, not £1.95 on the budget shelves).

Each make of home computer uses a different form of video information – in some cases it also depends on type of monitor, etc. In what form should the MUG send you the picture? Well, there are two answers. One is for the MUG to ask what you are using, and to send a machine-specific version; bad luck if they don't know about your machine. The other is to invent a machine-independent protocol for sending the pictures, and to require each home micro to have a program which will then display it as best it can. Both of these require a lot of extra work on the part of the MUG writer (which would make MUGs more expensive); and both would require that the players get a specialised program to receive and display the image. This has the side effect that it drastically cuts down the potential market; right now the games can be used by anyone with a terminal (emulator) and a modem. The second solution probably would also increase the amount of information which has to be transmitted, which bears on the second problem. Device-independent forms are not usually the most compact or efficient.

Once that's all been solved, there is still the transmission problem. How much data is needed for a picture? Well, since he mentioned it, lets consider the Atari ST; it requires a little over 32000 bytes, including colour info. Some 8-bits need less; some machines, like the Amiga, can use more; but 32000 is probably a nice sort of average number, for the sake of doing some rough calculation. There are various data-compression techniques; but they tend to be less effective the more 'interesting' an image is. For really complex pictures, the simpler data-compression techniques may actually increase the amount of data to be shipped. The more complex techniques don't tend to do this, but they require absolutely perfect data transmission – a single bit error can turn the picture into complete garbage. This means error-correcting transmission, more cost, and a lot more overhead. So, for the sake of argument, let's say that one way or another we have to ship about 32000 bytes. Of course simple graphics, like ViewData, CeeFax, etc, need a lot less, but since Mr Handy is comparing against *Defender Of The Crown* I doubt that would make him happy.

Now, how are we shipping it? Why, down the phone line. If you've got a 1200 baud modem (not too unusual), you can grab about 120 bytes per second. So, our 32000 bytes takes about 250 seconds to transmit – a bit over four minutes. Do you want to wait four minutes between moves, while the game draws a picture? The people stuck with 300 baud modems have to wait four times as long – makes a typical cassette loader look good. Of course, you could always lease a MegaStream link from BT. But not on my salary . . .

I expect we will eventually see picture MUGs since people seem to like them. It'll be a few years, though, at least, before it can be done at home prices. And, when it happens, it may well involve some totally different technique. For example, how about special MUG playing software for the home micro, which receives only a special code string ('show picture number 17485923') and then displays the picture taken from a video-disk bulk store attached to the home micro? You'd be sent the disk (for a fee, of course) when you signed up for the game – by then we'll all have the CD-ROM drives, won't we?

Cheers . . .
Paul Smee, Bristol

Er . . . cheers Paul!

AVAST SUBJECT

Dear Games Machine
On the subject of piracy: it concerns the subject of software lending libraries, that are freely advertised in many national magazines. It strikes me that, as all software is sold under the condition that it is 'not for resale, hire, all rights reserved', etc, then these libraries who lend software to people are blatantly flouting the law.

Three years ago, there were numerous libraries operating and advertising freely in the press, then came the new laws on software copyright, and the formation of FAST. The Software for hire adverts disappeared overnight, as you would expect.

So why is it then, that over the past year or two, they've all started reappearing? I find the whole situation very irritating, as I presume that these activities push up the price of software, therefore those of us who choose to buy our games in the normal way, must be subsidising the pirates' activities.
A Regular Reader

Software Libraries themselves are not against the law, possibly what they do is. If a library purchases software on which it states (as it does on most modern packaging) 'Any unauthorised copying, hiring or lending is illegal' and they go ahead and lend the game out, they are liable to be prosecuted under criminal law and sued for damages under the provisions of civil law.

THE INK IS BLACK

Dear Games Machine
As a rubber-keyed 48K Spectrum owner, a CRASH subscriber and an occasional YS reader, I must congratulate the staff of THE GAMES MACHINE.

TGM003 was the first time I bought it, and it won't be the last. The layout cannot be faulted, and as in CRASH, the reviews are informative. The features were generally good, although I must voice my strongest disapproval of Mel Croucher's Racism in Software article. It is absolutely ludicrous to suggest that white characters are used in preference to black characters. Some of the garbage spoken by Mel Croucher is reminiscent of speeches by Labour's loony left – need I make any more comparisons?

Concluding my letter, I must express my sincerest wishes for the long-life of THE GAMES MACHINE. It is, in my opinion, a better organised mag than the unfortunate LM, and I hope that it grows to the popularity of CRASH and ZZAP!
Scott McGlashan, Glasgow

Thank you for your letter Scott. We're delighted with the way sales of the magazine are going. Nothing official yet, but it's rapidly catching up with the other two.

WHO THE HELL IS MEL?

Dear Games Machine
TGM004 has to be the best yet. What with the Ultimate interview, excellent previews and reviews, but one feature I was particularly interested in was Mel Croucher's Industrial Child Abuse article. A lot of heartache seems avoidable through common sense; who in their right mind would sign themselves away without a written guarantee of money being paid. But then I suppose the answer to that would be: 'who's going to swindle innocent little me?'

There seems to be plenty of sob stories flying around, but surely some young programmers have made it without being ripped off.

Before I go could someone tell me who (or what) Mel Croucher is. Where did he arise from or is he just a figment of everybody's imagination?
Alistair Crichton, Irvine, Ayrshire

Yes, we've been wondering who the hell Mel Croucher is . . . and why? Remember the software house Automata? No? Neither do we, but Mel had something to do with a character called the PiMan . . . or something . . .

BAUD WITH DEFENDER

Dear Games Machine
I am considering purchasing a Compunet Modem for my Commodore 64 which seems to offer good value for money, what do the experts at Newsfield think of this package?

My main problem with using modems is the cost. How much do the different MUG's and billboards etc, cost to use, and are there any cheap rates or free services?

All of Newsfield's magazines are brilliant (I now buy CRASH, ZZAP! 64 and THE GAMES MACHINE), although I hope that the Adventure Trail will still continue in CRASH now that Derek Brewster has left (what's he doing now?)
Richard Taylor, Rugby, Warks

For more information about Compunet and the excellent services they provide why not drop them a line at; UNIT 26, SHERATON BUSINESS CENTRE, WADSWORTH ROAD, PERIVALE, MIDDLESEX, UB6 7JB. Derek Brewster is now running a new software label called Zeppelin Games, whose products we hope to be reviewing in forthcoming issues. However, even though the great quester has left CRASH Towers, never fear, the adventure trail will continue.

MORE CONTROL

Dear Games Machine
Being an avid games player I'm quite worried where games programming is going. As games are nearing arcade-quality with Amiga and ST games getting better and better all the time, there is one major aspect of arcade games being missed out – the games control. It's alright if you're playing a shoot-'em-up, but if your playing *Out Run* for example; a joystick just won't do – when the game might be graphically sound, using anything else but a steering wheel as control doesn't seem right. Non-arcade conversions like *Test Drive* and *Crazy Cars*, where the graphics are brilliant, could also benefit from the steering wheel treatment.

I have only heard of one peripheral for better control and that's *Gauntlet 2* with the add-on for four players at a time. I'm not implying that software companies should shell out millions developing a new form of game control, but a neutral manufacturing company could develop it so you won't get one steering wheel made by US Gold not working on a game by Electronic Arts. I hope this has not been a waste of time and software companies are taking note.
MJ Randall, Hounslow, Middx

You're right of course, and it wouldn't surprise us to see someone working quietly away at that very problem now. Let's hope they, whoever 'they' are, doesn't take too long about it.

USER FRIENDLY

Dear Games Machine
As the Leeds area is lacking an Atari ST user club, several friends and I have decided to try and put one together.

We have, at present, around 12 people definitely interested, but we shall need a lot more to make it a viable proposition.

This venture will not be for those who intend purely to rip-off software. It is for those who are dedicated to learning how to use their machine to the fullest. We hope to have guest programmers from development houses along to explain the ins and outs of programming. If it is also possible, we will offer a P/D service. As the ST is an excellent music generator (ie MIDI), musicians who use the machine are also welcome. I use my machine for music as well as games and for writing these letters.

Anybody who is interested, please ring me on (0532) 871329, after 6.00pm, any weekday evening or any time during the weekend and let me know. If you don't have a phone, write to the address below.

We will organise a meeting and take things from there.

We should be grateful for any support you can give us.
Paul Crosby, 4 Station Close, Garforth, Leeds LS25 1PT

If there are any Atari ST users in the Leeds area who would like to join a new, up and coming user club, why not contact Paul.

ABOMINATION HILL

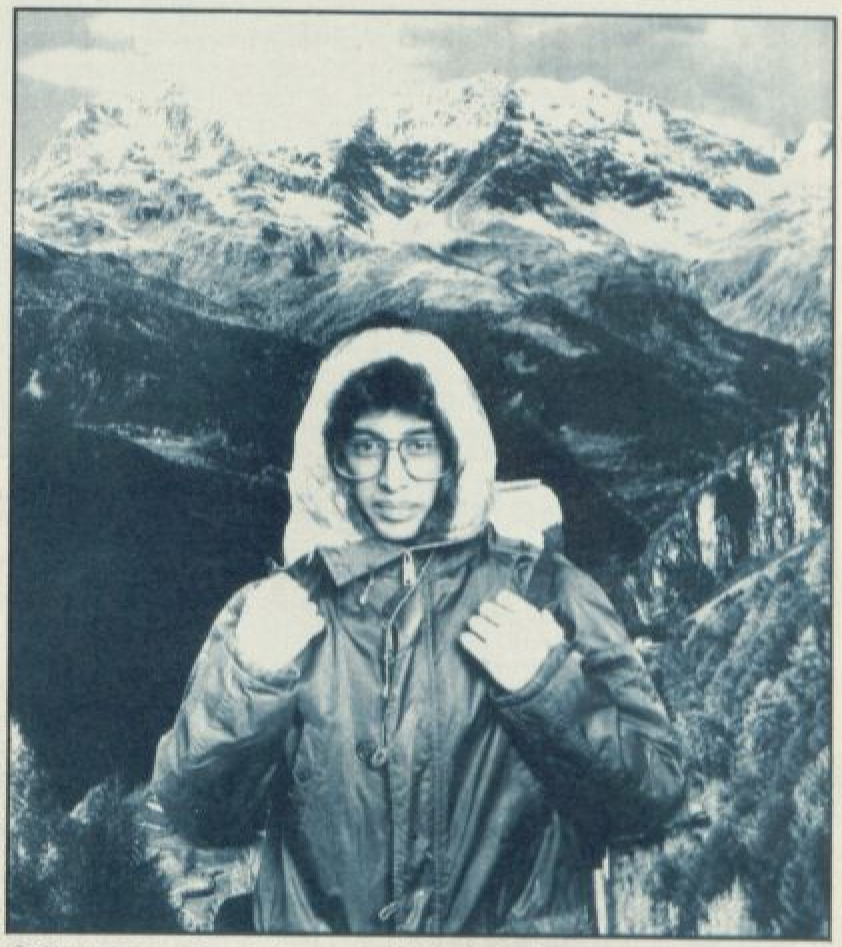
DESTINY SOFTWARE is running a competition in connection with the company's first release, *Yeti*, in which the lucky winner could receive £30,000.

The competition has been organised around the much-publicised Himalayan expedition led by mountaineer/adventurer/explorer **Chris Bonnington**. For once, Bonnington is not out to be first to the top of a mountain, he aims to find the elusive Abominable Snowman *aka* Big Foot *aka* Yeti.

William Hill are offering very high odds of 150 to 1 against success and Destiny Software has placed a bet of £200 that the Yeti will be found. If they are proved right, the bet will be cashed and the winnings given away to a lucky entrant. All you have to do to enter is send a postcard to **Destiny Software, *Lamerton House, 23 High Street, London W5 5DF***, with a maximum of 50 words on the back describing what you think the Yeti will look like . . . the best description wins.

Bonnington has expressed great confidence in finding the legendary beast, and claims that too many trustworthy eyewitnesses have seen it for them not to be believed. His plan is simple enough: climb into the Himalayas and then sit quietly for however long it takes until the Yeti decides to put in an appearance. Believing it to be a creature of some intelligence, Bonnington argues that previous expeditions have failed to meet a Yeti face to face because they have been too noisy and aggressive.

Whatever Bonnington discovers, Destiny is releasing the game *Yeti* to coincide with this expedition, available first for Spectrum and Commodore 64.



Software person Francis Lee meets his destiny in front of a very cold backdrop

RARE ENQUIRIES

FOLLOWING our article in TGM 004 on **Rare Ltd**, the company owned by the Stamper family, who used to be Ultimate, numerous programmers and development teams have been ringing the offices for Rare's number, all keen on either development for the Nintendo market or Rare's new high-speed Z80 arcade board. It has to remain a matter of confidence for the time being as to who, but some pretty hefty software names are included among the enquirers.

FOR FOX SAKE

GRANATH, a world in a parallel universe, has been at the mercy of dinosaurs for millenia. Only a few mammals survive and the human race has been wiped out but for one powerful lone female. This solitary heroine, Vixen, was raised by the wily foxes and is bestowed with magical powers given to her by the Fox Sages. With the ability to metamorphose into a fox, and armed with her magical whip, she valiantly fights to rid her world of the prehistoric monsters. *Vixen* will be released on all major formats in April.

The chief whip – the picture of the barbaric beauty is not a screen shot of the game

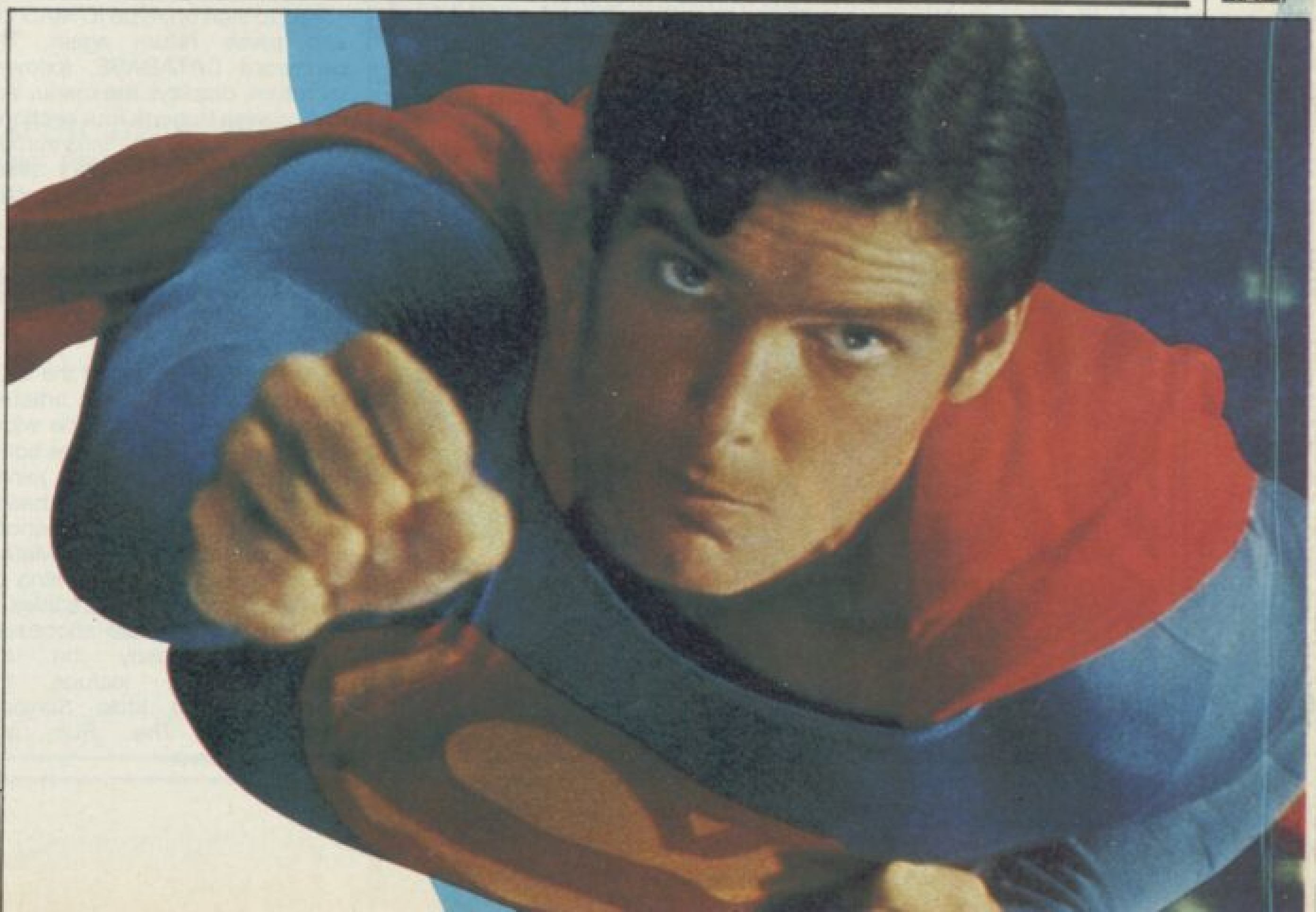


PRESS ANY KEY

SUPER DAY

SUPERMANis 50! Created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, the man of steel has been delighting audiences around the world with his superhuman feats. Action Comics was the first medium by which the Kryptonian was made known to the public, although films and eventually television soon saw his potential and helped spread his fame. As awareness of Superman grew so did his powers: from the very humble beginnings of being able to run fast and jump eight miles, the modern red, yellow and blue crusader can fly faster than the speed of light, possesses super-breath, has X-ray vision and can magically change from his alter ego Clark Kent into the saviour of the universe. Who knows what powers he will need in order to deal with the problems of the world in another 50 years?

Up, up and away, faster than a speeding bullet – Happy Birthday dear Superman



SEEN ONE AH–64 APACHE HELICOPTER, YOU'VE SEEN 'EM ALL

LAST ISSUE we reviewed version updates of *Gunship* from MicroProse and *Tomahawk* from Digital Integration, both for the PC Compatibles. If you have a look at the *Gunship* review, you will, of course, notice that the screen shot is actually from *Tomahawk* and vice versa. THE GAMES MACHINE humbly apologises for this error and assures all concerned (especially Fiona from MicroProse) that this will not happen again – at least, not until the next time . . .

In this issue we include yet another version update for *Gunship*, this time for the Atari ST – have a look and see if we got it right this time.

THE MANDARIN MILLION

A MAJOR new software force was launched in February with a budget of £1 million at its disposal to provide exclusive games for 'the discriminating user'. Called **Mandarin**, it combines the Europress Group in a series of joint ventures with some of the UK's top programming teams. First title for release is a space shoot-'em-up from **Powerhouse Software** called *Icarus*, only available for the BBC B, B+ and Master. **Level 9 Computing** has also joined forces with Mandarin, and at the end of March will be releasing the adventure trilogy *Time And Magik*, available for most 8- and 16-bit machines.

ANGLIAN FOR AN AWARD

KNIGHTMARE, Anglia Television's interactive adventure game, has won the Jean d'Arcy International Award for video production in Paris against some tough competition from 19 entries from around the world including Japan, West Germany and the United States. The international jury praised *Knightmare*'s 'original conception and technical innovations'. The production company, **Ideas Factory**, is to working on another 13–part *Knightmare* series for Anglia which is to be screened on children's TV in the autumn.



Tim Child, deviser of Anglia TV's Knightmare, *and director Sally Freeman on a computer generated set, proudly displaying their award*



DIAL–A–DEMO

MICROLINK is offering a 'try before you buy' facility. Computer users who haven't yet seen the range of services Microlink has to offer can now log on directly for a free interactive demonstration. All you need is a 1200/75 baud modem and a telephone connection to (01) 583 1275. Once online, at the >PAD prompt, type CALL 72 and press return. When asked to sign on, type ID MAG111 and press return again. The password DATABASE, followed by return, displays the menu. You can browse through four sections: communication, information, services and leisure, each describing a different aspect of the system.

HUBBARD GOES US

ROB HUBBARD, one of the UK's leading computer music artistes, who left our shores for the wider spaces of the Untied States some months ago, has joined **Electronic Arts**. He is to be based at the company's American headquarters in San Mateo, California and will be working on the development of future titles.

Hubbard's musical successes to date, mostly on the Commodore 64, include the award winning titles *Sanxion*, *Monty On The Run* and *Knucklebusters*.

THE BUSINESS

COMMODORE BUSINESS MACHINES has launched a personal computer system based on the Amiga specifically for the small business market. Named the **Amiga System 500**, it incorporates a



high–resolution colour or mono monitor, the MPS 1200P dot matrix printer, PC Transformer and *The Works* (a software package consisting of word processor, spreadsheet and database modules). Retailing at £699 plus VAT with the colour monitor and £599 for mono, the Amiga System 500 will be available from February 22 through authorised dealers.

SEGA CUTS PRICE

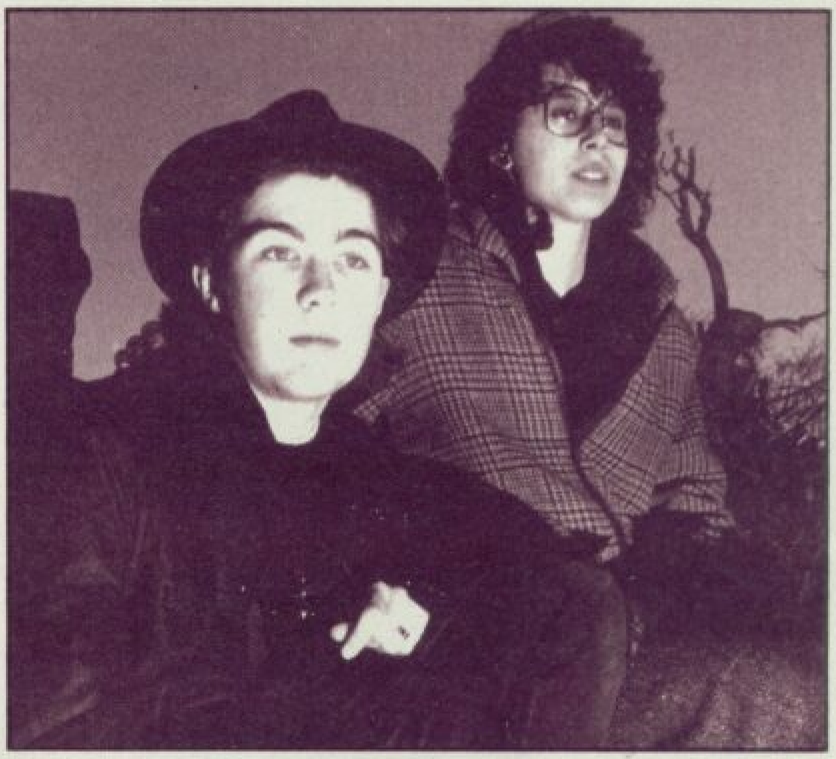
THE RETAIL PRICE of the Sega console system has been reduced. £124.95 will now buy: the Sega Master system, the Light Phaser Gun and shooting game plus either *Out Run*, *Space Harrier* or *Rocky*.

ABSTRACT CONCEPTS

MINDFIGHTER is to be the first adventure release from new software company **Abstract Concepts** – described as a 'serious' sister to Delta 4. Programmed by **Fergus McNeill** of *Boggit* and *Bored Of The Rings* fame, the game is based of the book of the same name and has been designed by its authoress, **Anna Popkess**.

Set for release in April, *Mindfighter* is set in a post–nuclear holocaust world and the story tells of the quest of a little boy called Robin to help the survivors. Robin, although only eleven years, is a student of parapsychology who possesses a high degree of control over his mind. He quickly discovers that evil forces are at work on his decaying world; what survivors are left are being cruelly suppressed by The System – an extremely fascist regime who have grasped control. The only way to help these people is for Robin to return to the present day and prevent the World War III from taking place.

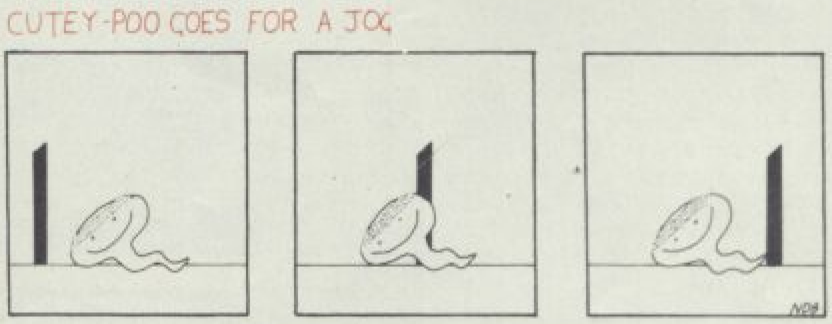
The adventure uses a new programming system called SWAN and features digitised graphics, icons and a parser to match any other on the market today. A copy of the book will be included in the *Mindfighter* packaging, and the game will be available on most 8- and 16-bit formats.

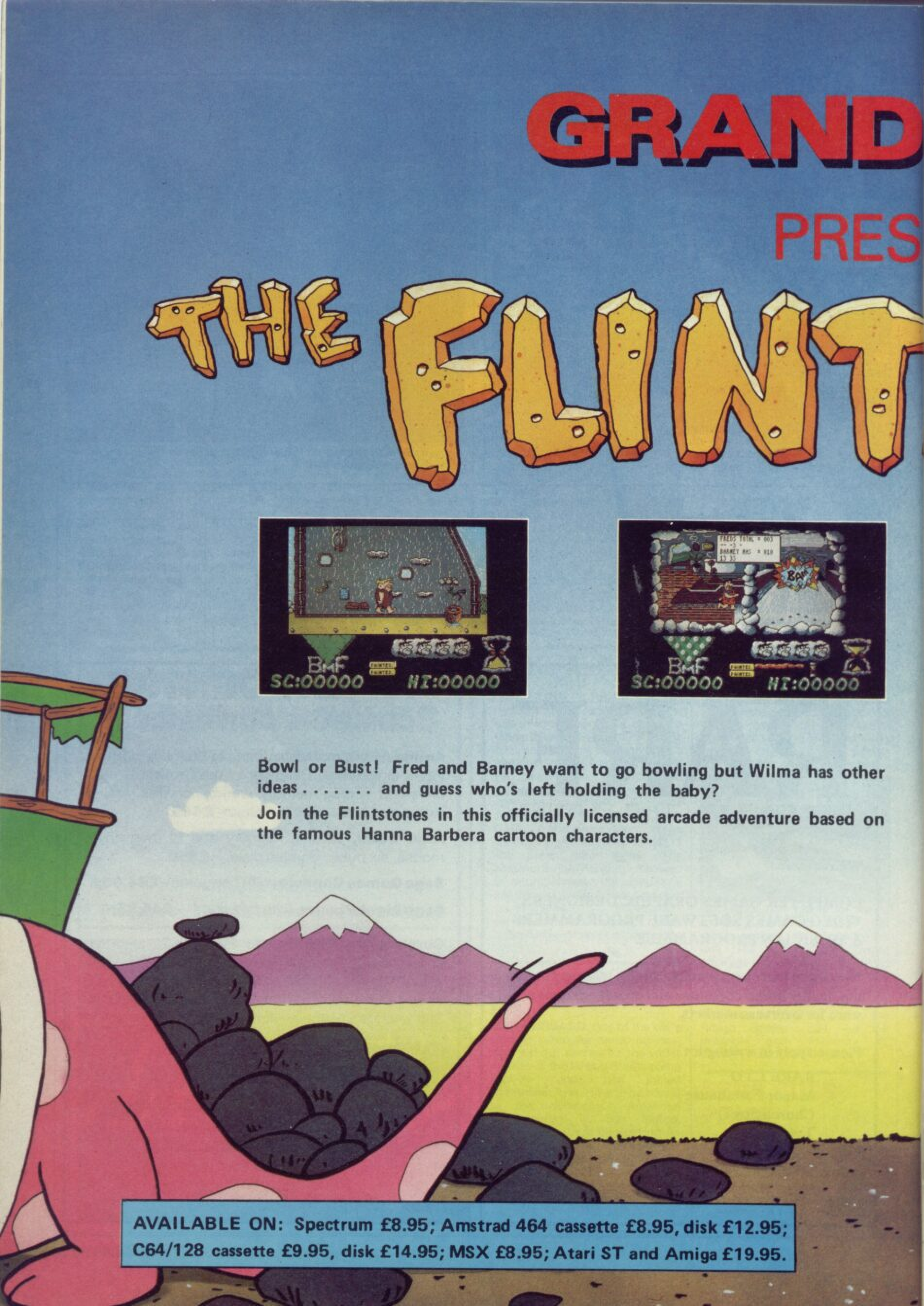


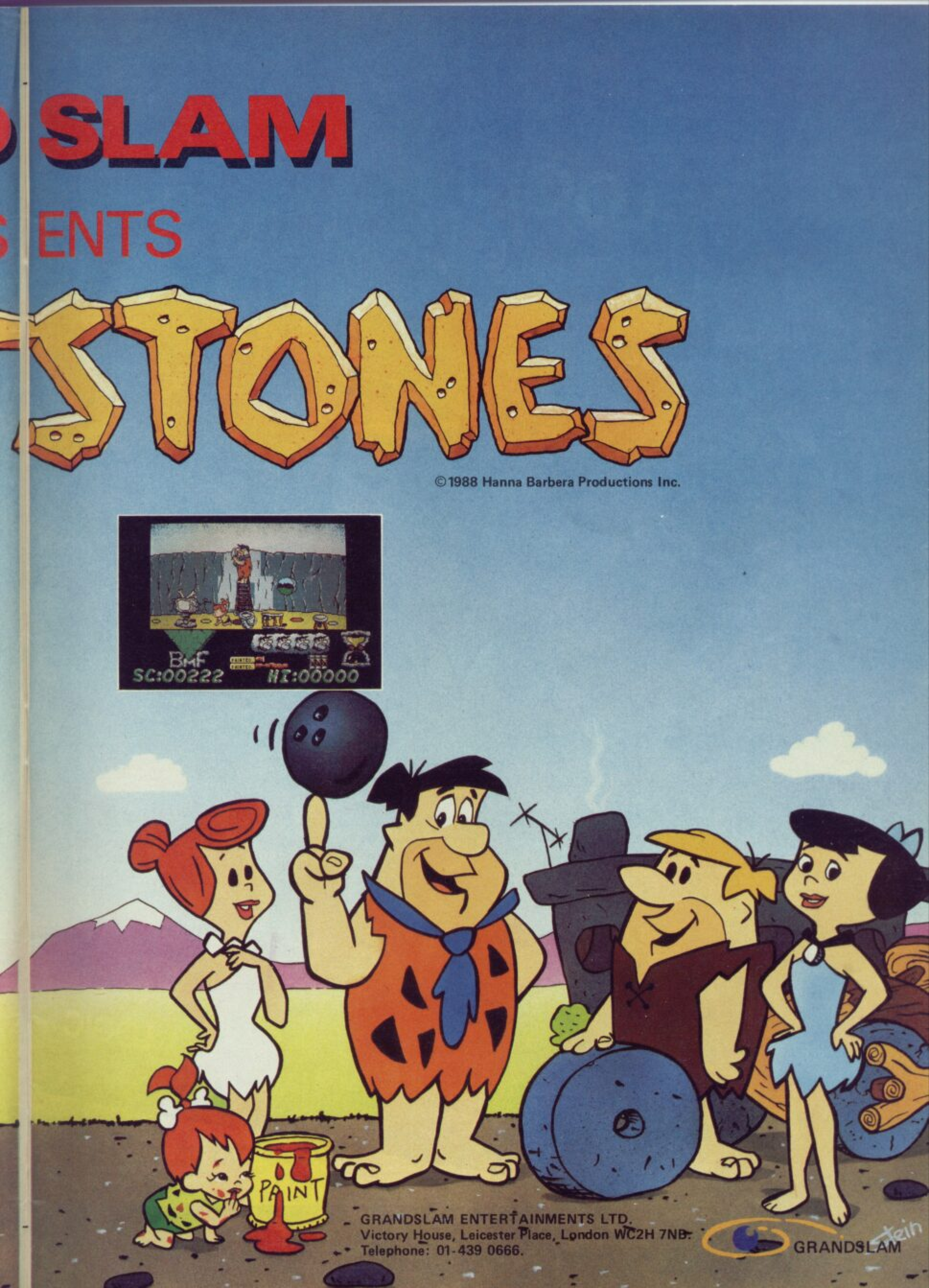
I cannot see 'train' – Fergus McNeill and Anna Popkess wait for one on Ludlow station – an adventure in itself

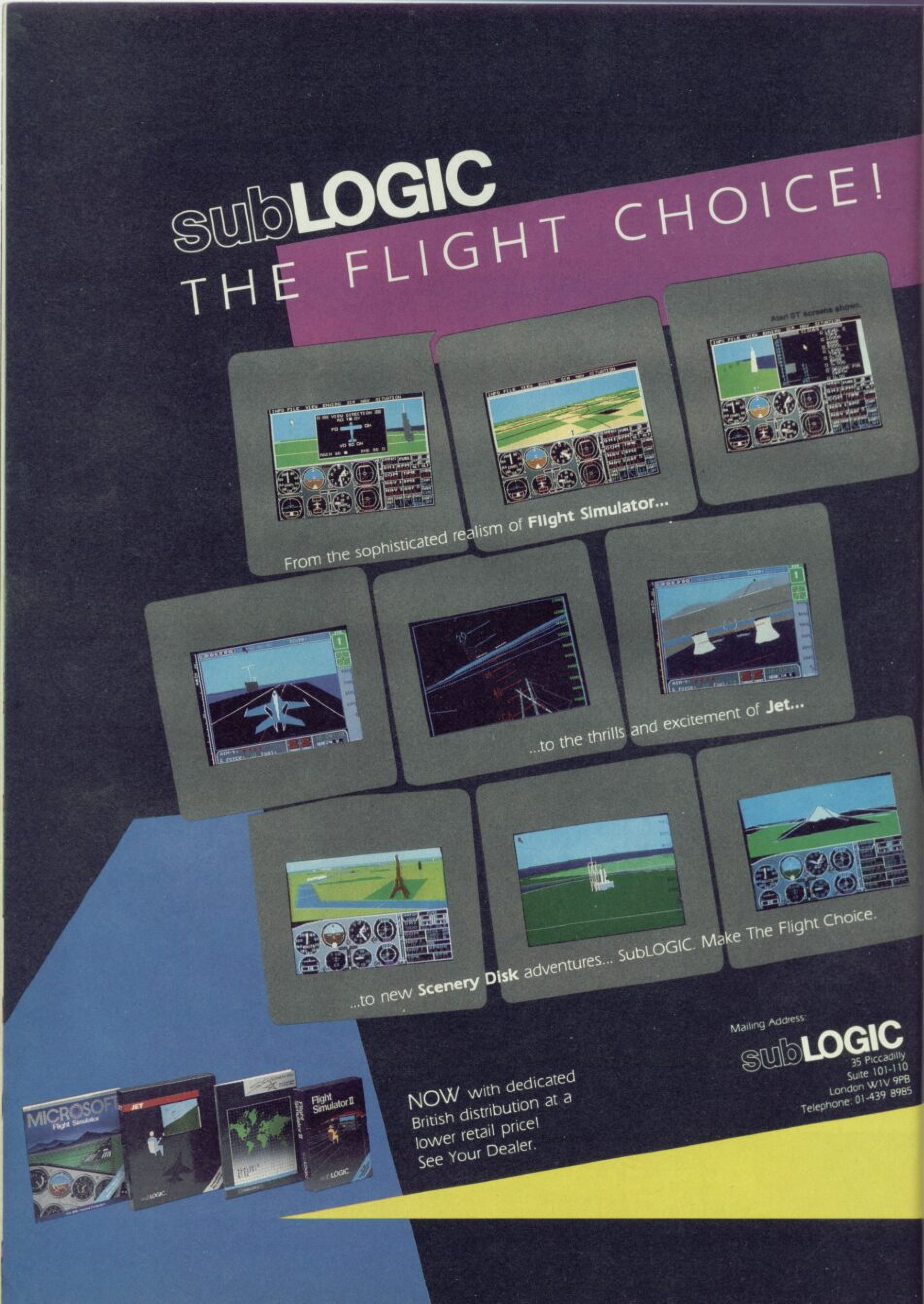
ALL SYSTEMS THREE GO!

JUST AS we were putting the finishing touches to this issue, who should ring the office long after hours, but **Mark Cale** of **System 3**, to tell us that from Midnight on February 29, System 3's contract with Activision is officially ended and they are on their own again. With some very big hits under their belts including the *International Karates*, *Knights Of Bangkok* and the monster C64 hit *The Last Ninja*, System 3 can look forward to a bright future. Plans are afoot for a large promotional campaign soon, but Cale isn't saying about what just yet.




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SATURDAY MORNING PICTURE SHOWS

Cinemaware, whose Defender Of The Crown **set a 16-bit standard for others to beat, are back in action with material that affectionately dips into those Saturday morning matinées so popular in the cinemas of yesteryear. We take a look at their two new games, marketed in the UK by Mirrorsoft.**

If you ask anyone who works for Cinemaware, they'll tell you that they see themselves as the next generation of computer entertainment producers – as important to computers as the first talkies were to the film industry. For the future the company is heading towards interactive video and CD-ROM technology for further products, but meanwhile they are enthusiastically pursuing the task of putting the ultimate interactive movie onto a home computer, with themes ranging from comedy to tragedy and a fair bit of heroic fantasy in between to keep everyone entertained . . .

After a flying start with the highly acclaimed games *Defender Of The Crown, Sinbad And The Throne Of The Falcon* and *SDI*, Cinemaware's current release is another homage to film – wrapped around the theme of the Thirties gangster movies, *King Of Chicago* is reviewed in this issue. And there are two more cinematic products ready for spring launches, first



Cinemaware take film-style animation turtner than ever before with the comedy game The Three Stooges *– Amiga screens*

being *The Three Stooges*, based around the dubious exploits of those daft American comedians, Moe, Curly and Larry.

President of the Cinemaware Corporation, Bob Jacob, has made great claims for it. For a start, he reckons it is the first computer program which really takes full advantage of its licence, and certainly when you see the animated graphics, you can see what he means. No stick figures here! The real life Stooges in authentic monochrome flesh are unmistakable. And there's over 900K of compressed, digitised sound effects in the game, including clear and recognisable sampled speech from some of The Three Stooges's classic films. Who can ever forget Curly's immortal 'Nyuk, Nyuk, Nyuk!' or Moe's strangled cry of frustrated rage: 'You idiot!'?

If that isn't sufficient to get worked up about, then Bob and the Cinemaware team are authentic to their Hollywood inspiration, even to producing interesting statistics and items of production information such as you get in those lavish, colour brochures they sell at big movie premières to help recover the money lost making the film. Did you know, for instance, that the guy who wrote *The Three Stooges* is the same man who wrote the navigation program for the Space Shuttle? At least the custard pie trajectories should be accurate.



The game itself, programmed by **Incredible Technologies**, is in a similar vein to *Defender Of The Crown* in as much as it is an interactive movie. In every other respect it is completely different! Controlling The Three Stooges, your objective is to guide them through a movie (packed with the sort of situations matinée audiences loved to participate in by giving forth with suitably soppy sighs and appropriate groans of anguish) and attempt to raise money for Ma's Orphanage. This venerable institution is threatened with closure by the evil banker, leaving Ma and her three delectable daughters homeless (ahhhh!).

To rake in the finance the boys take on a series of odd jobs including prize fighting (except Curly can't fight unless he hears *Pop Goes The Weasel* and Larry's violin is broken); becoming waiters at a top restaurant (how good are you at throwing custard pies?); and tackling medical matters at the Stoogeville Hospital (smacks of the Marx Brothers' *Day At The Races*).

From the Amiga screen shots, it is obvious that the standard of graphics are high, and when combined with computer animation, the whole game works to stunning effect. Amiga and ST versions will be available in March, retailing at £24.99, and the Commodore 64/128 version is expected in April – but on disk only – which should retail at £14.99.



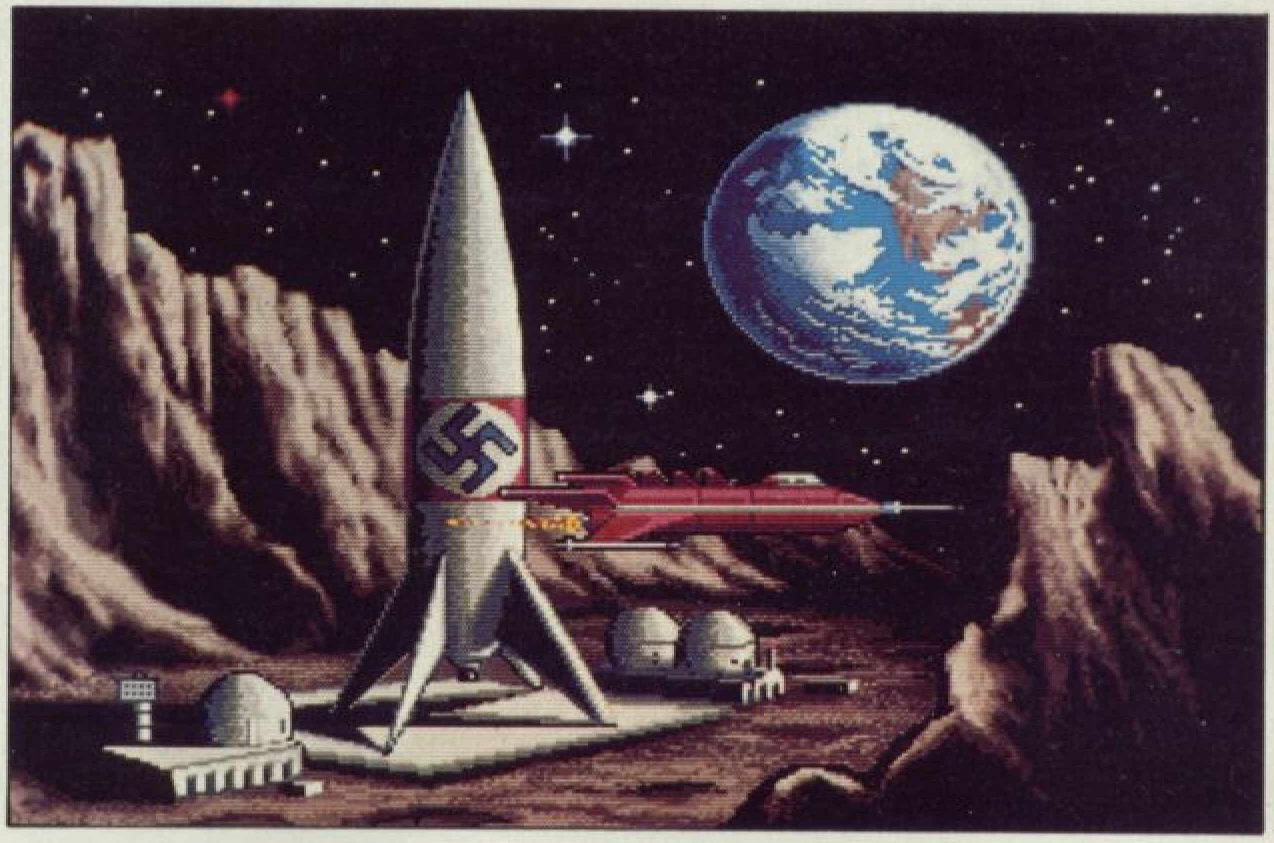
PRESS ANY KEY

LOAN RANGER

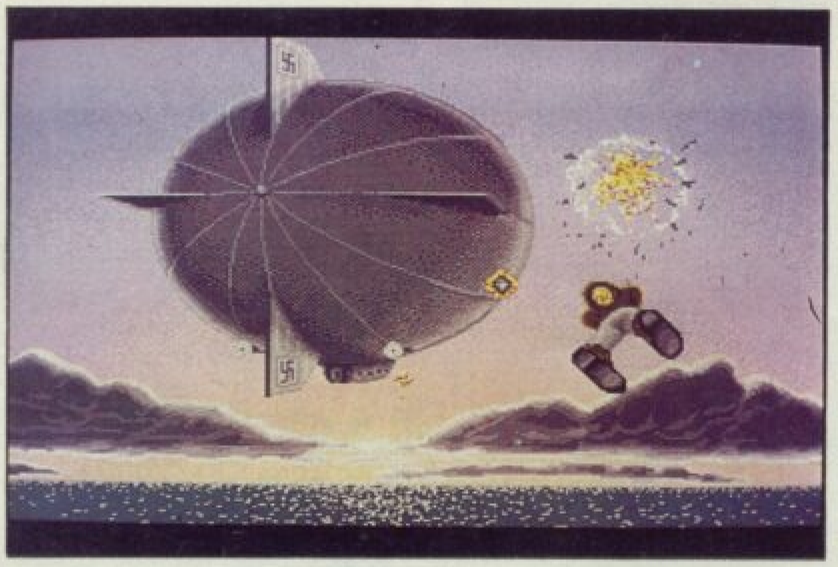
If you were brought up on Saturday morning picture shows where real heroes saved real damsels with real dramatic endings – not the kind of cissy stuff you get now on TV, such shows as *Kissyfur* or *Gobots* – Cinemaware's early summer release may hold particular interest . . .

Those matinée shows contained weekly adventure episodes which always left the audience with a cliff-hanger ending – will the hero's finger nails hold out . . . ? Cinemaware's *Rocket Ranger*, inspired by heroes such as Flash Gordon and Rocket Man, is the title of the new and intriguingly cinematic game, and it follows in the matinée footsteps, being split into different episodes, each with a cliff-hanging situation at the end. Set in the Forties, the war is raging and the Nazis are advancing into the rest of Europe. But meanwhile in the future . . . a group of 21st century scientists, who have backseen that the Nazis will/did win the war, will/have ambitiously send(t) a rocketsuit, raygun and a secret decoder wheel back through time as a loan to you, in the hope that you can save mankind (forgive the mixed tenses, but life gets difficult in this scenario . . .).

Rocket Ranger is packed full of atmospheric and highly stylistic graphics, reminiscent of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* – the film that for the Thirties and Forties embodied the future – and features two megabytes of sampled speech. The animated graphics, needless to say, are superb, and there are some nice touches of typically over the top humour, such as the flying bird that gets knocked dizzily off course by Rocket Ranger's effortless leap into space. Planned for release on the Amiga in May and the Commodore 64/128 in June, *Rocket Ranger* should also be available for the Atari ST, PC and Apple IIGS in the near future. Roll on CD-ROM!



The nasty Nazi rocket awaits launch, but can Rocket Ranger *step in and save the day . . . ?*



A large airship is in danger – Rocket Ranger *to the rescue – it's a real cliff-hanger! Can he do it? Tune in next week kids . . . Amiga screens*

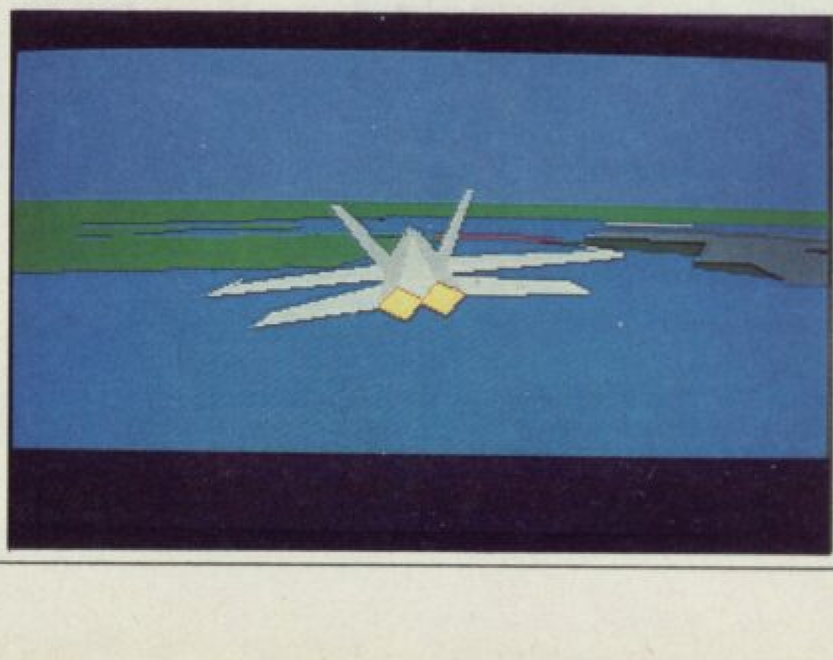
AFTER AFTERBURNER

PROGRAMMERS have been trying to write the perfect 16-bit flight simulator since before the machines hit the shops. The real trick is to find some way of satisfying the serious simulation fan and yet attract the mass of gamesplayers who want something a bit more exciting than watching dials and reading vast manuals. Well **Electronic Arts** may just have done it. The simulation is called *Interceptor*, and it is for the Amiga. 'It has to be seen to be believed' is a well-worn cliché, but in *Interceptor*'s case it is true. Sorry our two still screen shots convey only a twentieth part of the visual excitement this program generates, but you do need to see it moving. Congratulations also to Electronic Arts for providing just about the most cleverly engaging preview demo we have ever seen.

Two jet aircraft are at the centre of this ultra-realistic simulation, the F-18 Hornet and the F-16 Fighting Falcon – you can select either. The flights all take place in the vicinity of San Francisco Bay, and feature six missions; interception of incoming cruise missiles, saving a pilot from drowning, preventing the escape of two stolen F-16s, a training mission, a top secret mission for advanced pilots and a free-flight mode.

What makes interceptor so different and exciting are the solid 3-D graphics. Not content with sitting the pilot in his cockpit at the controls, *Interceptor* has various viewing modes which can be freely flicked between as you please. Of course there is the usual cockpit point of view, but it is possible to look sideways and backwards over the tail as well. Additionally, you can set the viewing position outside the aircraft from what appears to be eight directions, from above it looking down or below it looking up – and there is a zoom facility too. Flicking between all these options can provide both the player and any onlookers with what looks just like a film; rapid cutting together of the 'scenes'

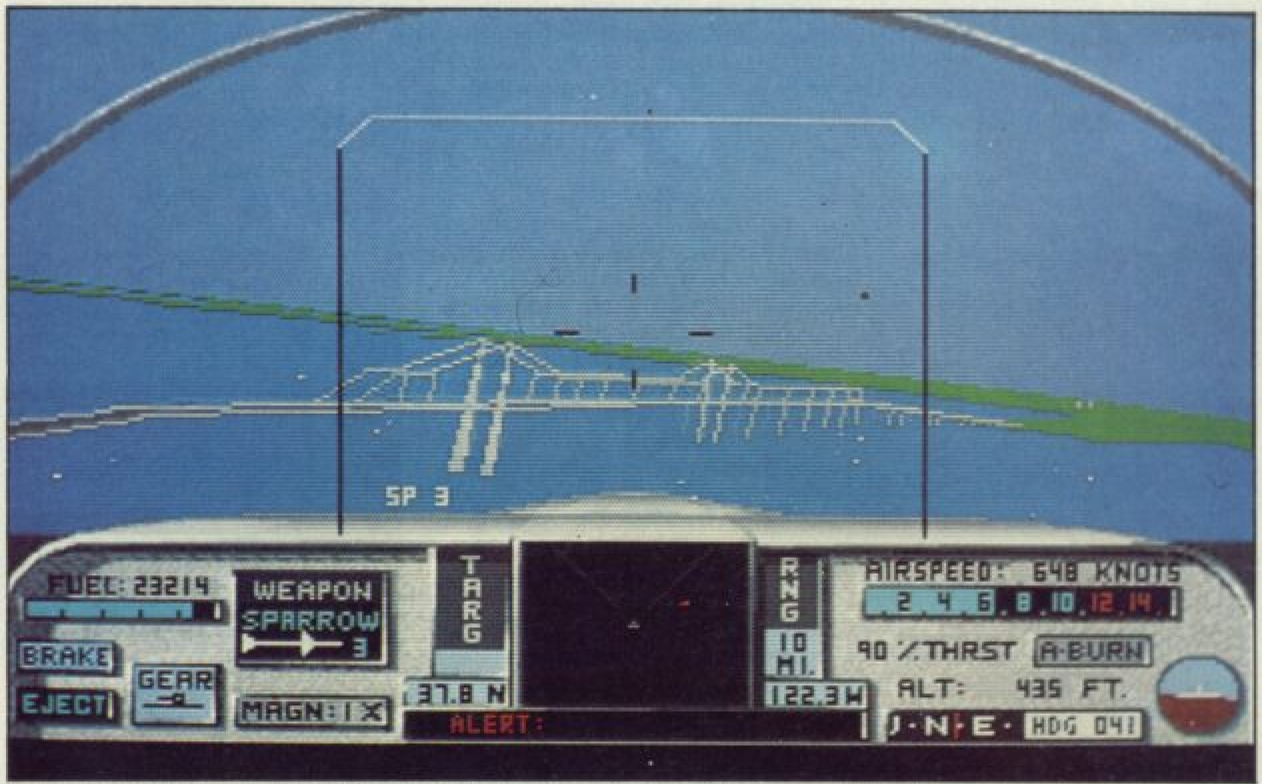
Stunning, high-speed flying action from all angles in the Electronic Arts ST Interceptor



can create as much excitement as the best aerial sequences from the movie *Top Gun*, especially when your fighter is heeling over in an eight-gee turn, chasing after a missile flying in low over the ground.

The ground detail is well realised (though necessarily simplified), but the Golden Gate Bridge is completely convincing whether you fly over or under it. A typical flight simulation problem is the pilot's inability to distinguish sea from sky when performing fast twists and turns; in *Interceptor* apart from the colours used, there are tiny details in the sea, and actually a sun in the sky – useful for orientation.

Your fighters are equipped with two sorts of missiles, Sparrow and Sidewinder, with full attack radar control, and a 6,000 rpm Vulcan cannon. You are protected by defensive radar and attack alarms, because the simulation does have enemy aircraft in the skies. The cockpit controls look clean, but we thought the HUD needs some added detail.



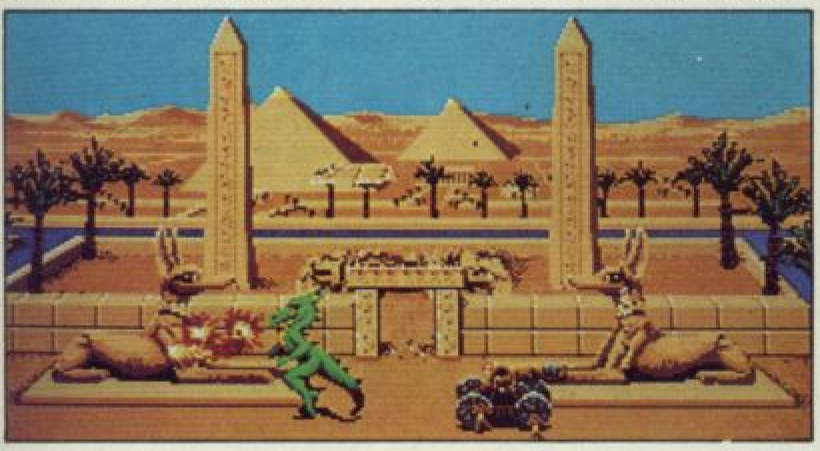
Two takeoff/landing areas are supplied, an airstrip near the sea's edge, which both planes can use, and an aircraft carrier, which only the F-18 can use. Landing on the carrier is alarmingly realistic, even to the grab wires violently catching the hook. There are innumerable other details in the game, too many to go into here, suffice it to say you can eject from the jet and watch the pilot parachute down, and the best gimmick is definitely the presence in your airspace of Airforce One – the President's plane. You can shoot it down too, but understandably, that makes you a terrorist!

Interceptor includes a wide variety of digitised jet and weapons sound FX. In keeping with the simulation's realism, the level of engine volume alters dramatically depending on whether you are inside or outside the aircraft and whether you are on afterburner or not.

Would-be passengers please fasten their seatbelts by May when *Interceptor* takes off.

AAARGH!

NO, it is not a cry of horror, but the sound a couple of monsters make in a forthcoming release from **Melbourne House** – and the game's called *Aargh!* as well.



Aargh! is another coin-op conversion from Mastertronic's Amiga board **Arcadia** system. You can play either of the disgusting heroes – an ogre or a dinosaur – depending on how you feel, with your main aim in life being to collect golden eggs. When five are safely hoarded away, it is time to go to a volcano where, presumably, a nice hot lava bath is waiting. The action takes place amidst 12 cities, and there are plenty of opportunities to do suitably monstrous things such as knocking down buildings, trampling on people and battling against killer hornets. And with your ogreish appetite, you will no doubt nosh through countless hamburgers – just like in real life.

Naturally, the cities' inhabitants are struck with neither your beauty nor your trampling habits and strike back using all the forces available to them, which include catapults and cannon.

Aaargh! goes on general release in April, first for the Amiga, ST and Commodore 64/128.

RENEGADE II

NOT so much an official sequel, more of an inspired original game, **Imagine**'s *Renegade* is back, meaner, tougher and generally a whole lot more unpleasant than



before. Matt, the (unofficial) brother Renegade is out investigating Mr Big's dodgy dealings, and in a similar manner to the official original coin-op conversion, Matt battles through level upon level fighting Mr Big's army of brainless thugs.

Though the game is relatively early stages of development, the graphics are already looking good – and in the majority of cases, very cartoon-like. Enemy thick-heads include a skinhead, a Beastie Boy with his 'pet' and the inevitable 'ladies'. Oh, and the name? It's called *Target Renegade*, and will be out for Easter.

THE HAT STRIKES BACK

IN A very nice shade of morning dew on fresh grass too, Green Beret returns to the action this summer with a new adventure as yet to be named. Plans for the game suggest it will be split into



several sections, each requiring the player to utilise different arcade skills. Our screen shot shows the first element – the fly-over, with Green Beret in his trusty aircraft bombing enemy land. This is really just a taster, we will bring the full story behind the game within the next few months.

SPILL YER GUTZ!

AFTER a great launch for **Special FX** this month with **Ocean**'s *Firefly*, the programming team are back at work developing their next game with the unappealing title of *Gutz*. The game takes place in, of



all things, a stinky alien body – how you got in there none of us are quite sure yet, but obviously the task is to emerge from it unharmed.

Much of the game time is spent in parts of the body running around trying to find an exit. There are five areas to explore, each with five sub-areas, all connected by tubes. The viscera are infested with odious bodily pests, and you have to select different weapons to deal with this vicious assortment of internal fauna.

At the end of each bodily section, battle takes place with a major organ – such as a kidney or heart – displayed in gross graphical detail. From what we've seen so far, *Gutz* appears impressive, with some marvelous graphics and wonderful sound FX. Out soon for Spectrum and Commodore.

ST and Amiga owners who want a few Special FX, should look out for *Vertigo*, currently under development – all THE GAMES MACHINE has been shown is a small part of the game with the hero running down a tunnel swarming with aliens coming in for the kill. More news on that one when we get it . . .

SHACKLED UP WITH US GOLD

SHACKLED is the title of the latest all-formats release from **US Gold**. A thinly disguised *Gauntlet* style



game, the player's problem is to search and fight through alien-infested mazes in order to discover and free a series of shackled prisioners. At the end of each maze stands a large opponent which, as usual, must be destroyed before you can move onto the next level. And so it goes on until all the prisioners have been freed. Out soon for the Spectrum 48/128, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad, Atari ST and with the possibility of an MSX version to follow.

And another US Gold release on Spectrum 48/128, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad and ST formats is *Desolator*, a maze exploration shoot-'em-up game. We have only seen something of the Spectrum *Desolator*, and pretty nifty it is too.

PSYGNOSIS READY

FOLLOWING the success of *Terrorpods* and *Barbarian*, 16-bit software house **Psygnosis** is almost ready to launch *Obliterator*, sadly not quite ready enough to make a review in this issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. As we go to press, they tell us they need another ten days to get the final touches sorted out.

Playing Drak the last of the Obliterators, you are up against some terrifying foes inside a



monstrous and sinister alien cruiser that has materialised in

Look out for a review of *Obliterator* next month, it will be available only for the Atari ST and Amiga, price £24.95.

ST STOOD STILL

OCEAN'S epic arcade adventure *Where Time Stood Still*, developed by **Denton Design**, is nearly completed. The game was fully previewed in TGM002, but just to recap it is similar in appearance to *The Great Escape* using four-directional scrolling. Set in the mysterious country of Tibet several million years BC, the player's task is to rescue a party of explorers who have flown through a time-warp and subsequently crashed their aircraft.

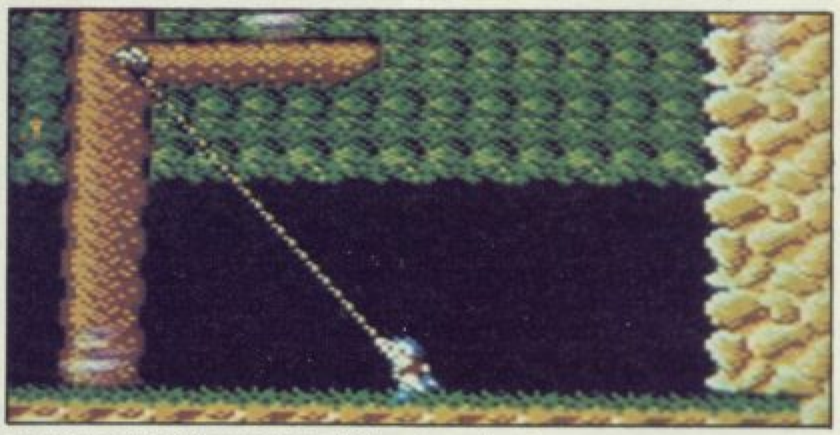
But the point of repeating this is so we can show you the ST



version, which is looking quite incredible – the main graphics are all displayed in shades of grey, making the adventure superbly atmospheric. You can try your hand at saving the explorers in April on the ST, Spectrum 128, Amstrad and Commodore 64/128.

THEY HAVE REBUILT HIM . . .

FOLLOWING *Side Arms*, the next release from **Go!** through the coin-op licence deal with Capcom is *Bionic Commandos*. The deal originally stated that Capcom and bionic arms. The objective is to fight your way through five levels of enemy-held territory to stop a nuclear bomb being detonated. Starting in a forest, the commandos' adventure takes them through towers, sewers, rockfaces and other danger-



would provide Commodore 64/128 conversions of all games released; however, as Go!'s new product manager David Baxter informed us, they are developing a British Commodore 64/128 version of each game as well. Should the US game, in their opinion, be substandard, this will ensure there is a British version to use instead. At the moment Go! are unsure how to release them, but it is likely that *Bionic Commandos* will have a British version on one side and the US on the other.

Back to the game . . . *Bionic Commandos* – if you have not played the coin-op – features two soldiers equipped with blasters

packed scenery.

Bionic arms come into their own with the climbing; pressing fire shoots out an arm extension to grab anything secure. The extension can then be used to swing on, or, by retracting it, to pull the commando upwards.

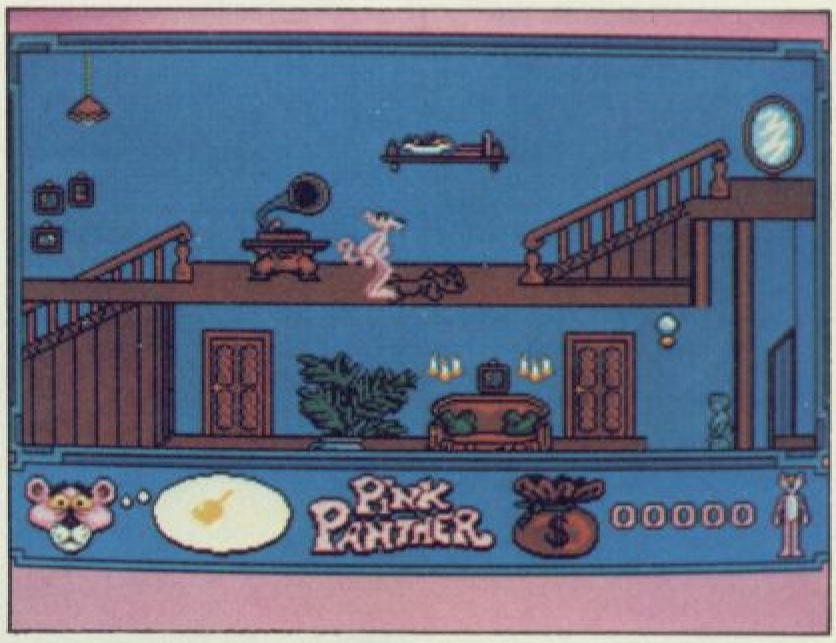
Both Commodore 64/128 and Spectrum formats are well underway, with **Software Creations**, the people who converted *Bubble Bobble* for the 64, looking after the Commodore side of things. The graphics have not been finalised, but they look promising and the game plays very well indeed, which must be good news for Go! as they have not really enjoyed a critical hit yet.

THEREBY HANGS A TAIL

GREMLIN GRAPHICS have taken over responsibility for the **Magic Bytes** label which Ariolasoft marketed before its recent withdrawal from the UK. First release due out in April is a licence that has been waiting for someone to pick it up for a long time – *The Pink Panther*.

The cerise-coloured animal has been employed as a butler, but in keeping with his devious personality, attempts to relieve the householder of his valuables. Never fear, Clouseau is near, and on his tail, searching all the reums (reums?) for 'im. And that is not all, because the householder has a tendency to sleepwalk, so things could get a little tricky and the panther may not find himself in the pink for long.

Written by **Rolf** and **Betina Lakamper** (*Western Games* and *Mission Elevator*), *The Pink Panther* will be released for the Atari ST, Amiga, Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, and Amstrad.




MACH 3
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Here at last! The game for the super heroes amongst you . . .
A fantastic arcade game in which you must reluctantly leave the beautiful Gwendoline behind and go and fight the monstrous Sfax.
Sfax is a mutant sorcerer from the Red Planet who has cast an evil spell over your ravishing companion, who is now dying a slow and cruel death.
You have no choice but to go beyond the portals of space and time in order to find this evil sorcerer, the physical embodiment of Sfax, and to destroy him!
Wait no more. Take charge of your super vessel . . .
● Incredible arcade flight/fight sequences
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"The graphics and sound are great! Solid colourful sprites with very pretty backgrounds in a realistic manner. MACH 3 is great fun and very addictive from the start. This is a fast shoot-'em-up in the best tradition." – GAMES MACHINE.
AVAILABLE ON:

SYSTEM	FORMAT	PRICE
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Amstrad/Schneider	Disc	£14.99
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HYPE HYPE HOORAY

Mad Mel, Media Mole, presents the fifth of his industrial cans of worms – the software charts.

Once upon a time, there was a man who had a software house. Now this software house had a product which wasn't very good, but then again neither was it very bad. The product didn't do fantastically well, but on the other hand it didn't do too badly. And that's the end of the story. Except for one thing, the product got into the Top Ten Software Chart of a certain magazine without a single copy having been sold. The magazine was called *Popular Computing Weekly*, the product was called *The Bible* and the man who had the software house? It was me, of course. And that's no fairy story.

Once upon another time there was another man who claimed to have written the greatest computer game ever. He did this so that a certain magazine would buy him lunch and he was flat broke, even though he made up the story on the spur of the moment. Imagine his surprise when the magazine was so impressed with the man's porky pies that they not only bought him lunch, but offered him the front page to launch the product without seeing any evidence at all. The magazine was called *Computer & Video Games*, the product was called *PiMania* and the man who hyped the non-existent product was, as if you didn't know, also me. (Mind you *PiMania* did end up winning Game Of The Year).

Maybe that was all a long time ago, but ever since then, I have regarded the software charts with an understandable suspicion. In fact I trust them about as much as a trouserful of ferrets. And as for the claims that software houses make, the stench of hype is never far from my nostrils. But I am a reasonable man, so in this month's Investigation I set out to discover if the charts were a true reflection of who sells what, or a load of old cobblers. And if anyone thinks that this month's episode of **Mercy Dash** is a bit far fetched, let's see if you will change your mind by reading HYPE HYPE HOORAY.

The best place to start was to talk to the man who commissioned the very first Gallup Chart before the days of budget software. Former *Home Computer Weekly* superstar . . .

PAUL LIPTROT

MEL - Why did you dream up the idea of a Gallup Chart for home computer software, Paul?

PAUL - We chose Gallup because of their name, very prestigious, even though it was costing us an arm and a leg. In the early days I knew several software houses who were dead against any charts, but they were like King Canute trying to hold back the waves. The charts were going to happen in a big way whatever they thought about it, and Gallup seemed the best idea.

MEL - Were the charts ever hyped?

PAUL - The software industry is so bloody disorganised I wonder if they could ever get their act together to organise a decent hype! Look, I know that Gallup isn't exactly fair, it can't be if they don't cover certain outlets. But just look at the other charts! They contain some incredible anomalies. My view is that out of all of them, Gallup is trying hardest to be accurate.

MEL - You're producing Software Choice these days. Has it got a best-seller chart in it?

PAUL - No. Personally, I'd love to publish a chart, but it's an exclusive publication to WH Smith, so it's simply not ethical to do it. It's also the largest circulation mag in the UK.

MEL - Well, it would be, wouldn't it. It's a flaming freebie. Do you think the charts are being hyped, Paul?

PAUL - Hyping probably still does happen, I know you've done it, but I've got no evidence. Anyway, I've got other things to occupy my mind.

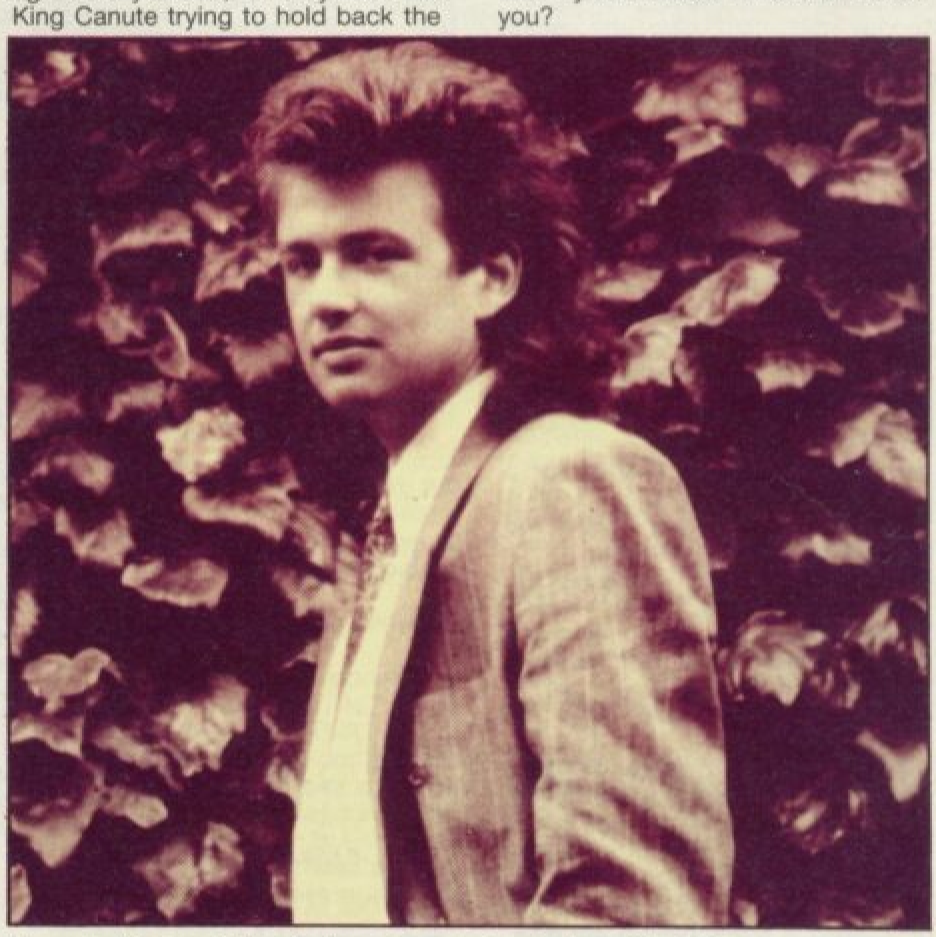
MEL - Ah, yes! Congratulations on your new marriage, and give my regards to King Canute.

Well, no really juicy meat to chew on there, so how about a chat with one of the men responsible for hyping, er, sorry responsible for promoting software houses and their products, Headlines Public Relations mogul . . .

SIMON HARVEY

MEL - What's up with your voice, Simon. Started puberty, have you?

SIMON - Yes, I've got one hair on my leg now, but the voice is more to do with my sore throat. What can I do for you?



No markets for handleless frying pans – merchant of hype Simon Harvey

MEL - I hear that you've called a halt to taking on new software houses, things must be going well.

SIMON - We represent Microprose, Martech, CCS, Excocet and two mega mystery outfits. So sure, I've called a halt now, otherwise there would be a conflict of interest what with everyone being in the same market.

PRESS ANY KEY

MEL - Is 'All 'Publicity Good Publicity'?

SIMON - Oh Gawd, here we go, I know exactly what you are trying to get me to say.

MEL - Alright then, was *Jack The Ripper* an amazingly successful hype? I just happen to have the *Daily Mirror* headline here, 'PORNO outrage at Ripper game'.

SIMON - Okay, so a few million people heard about *Jack The Ripper* through this, but what resemblance does it have to the game? Absolutely nothing! The *Mirror* totally ignored what we were saying, but that's the tabloids for you: they think with their hormones and not their brains. The MP who wanted it 'confiscated' is

"Gallup isn't exactly fair, it can't be if they don't cover certain outlets . . . "



'Porno' outrage at Ripper game

A BEST-SELLING home computer game which features pictures of brutally mutilated women has been reported to the police by a Tory MP. The game, Jack The Ripper, was given an "18" certificate by the British Board of Film Classification.

But MP Harry Greenway of Ealing North says: "It should immediately be confiscated."

The game, which shows a picture of a near-naked woman in a pool of blood, has been blasted as "pornographic" by a Labour spokeswoman.

But last night Clement Chambers, the 23-year-old chairman of the company releasing the game, was unrepentant.

"People are used to horror," he said.

"Jack The Ripper, because it has explicit details, adds a whole new dimension to computer games."

probably another rent-a-quote Peter Bruinvells, looking for publicity.

MEL - All publicity is good publicity?

SIMON - Over twelve million people heard about that product, from Radio One listeners to *Guardian* readers, and I reckon that CRL got damn good value for their fee. The power of the press is huge.

MEL - So you use the press to hype products?

SIMON - There's no market for a frying pan without a handle! You have to sell what people want. *Jack The Ripper* was a good adventure.

MEL - Bloody good, if I may say so. Well, bloody anyway. The Advertising Standards Authority have been giving certain outfits a lot of stick recently. Any comment about your role in promoting product that might not actually exist?

SIMON - It's a general problem. Magazines need loony lead-in times, at least six weeks, people like Boots make buying decisions every fortnight, and sure, programmers can let you down. The play-testing and debugging is a real pain in the arse, but yes, you've got a good point. When product is late, and the adverts are running, that's bad news.

MEL - Do you know of any products, and let me put this diplomatically, that have reached positions in the charts which do not accurately reflect the fact that they are selling abominably crap numbers?

SIMON - Yes. I know of one right now. On the other hand a lot of people who

"The MP who wanted it 'confiscated' is probably another rent-a-quote Peter Bruinvells, looking for publicity."



don't make the charts do sell a lot of product. Either they're in the wrong shops, or the product has a long shelf life, selling steady quantities. If people really believe that Code Masters are the biggest in the market with a turnover of £2 million, that damages us all. This market is not served very well by PR or hype. We must stop bickering among ourselves and try to promote the industry.

MEL - How?

SIMON - Don't waste journalists' time, don't mail out thousands of press releases every five minutes to idiots like you. The magazines get pissed off with loads of garbage, it just has a negative effect. And that's why I'm not going to say any more. By the way, what am I doing in **Mercy Dash** this month?

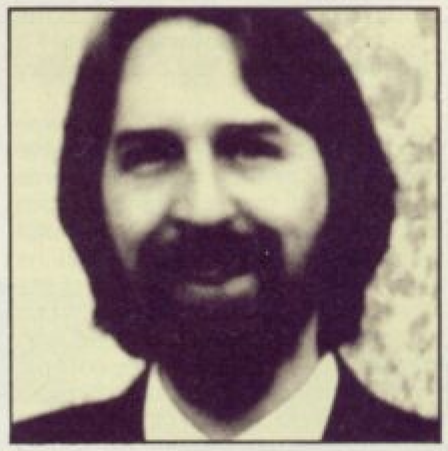
MEL - Nothing compared to what she'll be doing to you in Jersey next month. *

SIMON - Great. See you in Jersey, I'm looking forward to it.

I think that it is worth looking at the state of a single title in various charts at the moment. But to compare, say, a 'Readers Favourites Chart' in a monthly specialist magazine like CRASH with 'Europe's No 1 Weekly Software Chart like the Microdealer Top 30, is a pointless exercise. The former is obviously idiosyncratic to a particular machine, and must be at least a month out of date due to publication deadlines, whereas the latter is based on current sales figures in certain shops.

GARFIELD

. . . was voted a CRASH Smash recently, so it seems as good a title as any to look at. As I write this, *Garfield* is in the Top Ten of the Gallup Chart, it does not feature at all in the Top Thirty of the Microdealer Chart, and neither does it show in *Popular Computing Weekly*'s chart; which is very peculiar indeed, as *PCW*'s chart is compiled by Gallup!? However all of the charts agree that *Platoon* and *Out Run* are the two best selling games at the moment. *Garfield*'s stepfather, The Edge's boss **Tim Langdell** has



The sales are there but Gallup is not – The Edge's Tim Langdell

been quoted in the publication *Computer Trade Weekly* as saying the following:

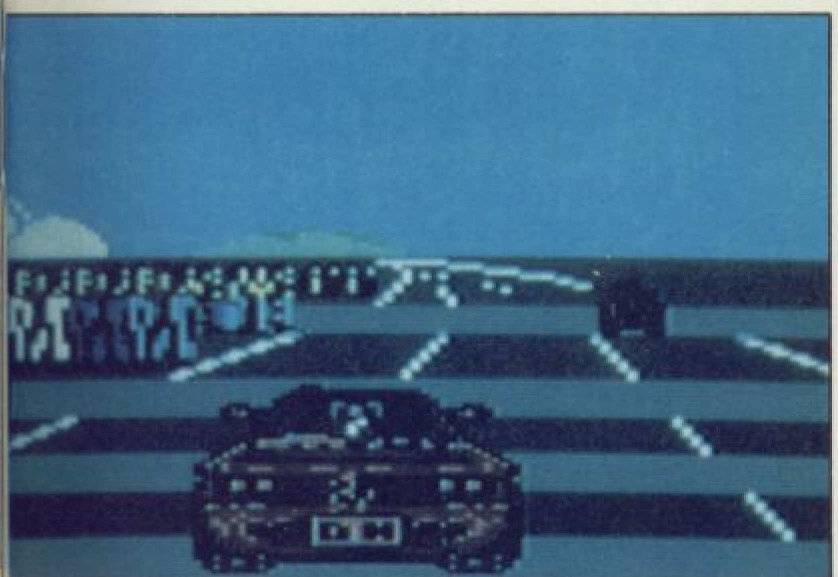
'We've had a 25,000 ship out on *Garfield*, and in many cases it's outselling *Out Run*. For some reason, our sales aren't being picked up by Gallup. This would appear to be more to do with their sampling methods than with our sales.'

But what I want to know is not numbers of product shipped, but the number that is actually sold in any given week. In computer software there's not so much a grapevine of rumour and gossip as a tropical rain forest of the stuff, and like the rain forest it gets tangled, steamy, it stinks a bit and the creek you're up will probably be blocked by twisted garbage. So it really is good to talk to someone who is prepared to quote facts and figures from first-hand experience. Such a man is the force behind a modestly successful software house called D&H Games,

* The reference to Jersey is with regard to Computer Arena 88, an industry conference organised by Newsfield Publications, which took place in St Helier March 13-15, and at which charts may or may not have been a matter for discussion . . .

JOHN DE SALLIS

MEL - Congratulations! I see that you were at Number 23 in last week's Gallup Chart with *Football Director*, and you're up to Number 16 this week.
JOHN - Yeah, funny that, seeing that our sales of the game are going down.
MEL - Er, down? Don't you mean up?
JOHN - No, you heard me right, they're going down! *Football Director* is our first game, it's been out since last summer, and we've sold about the same quantity every week for the past 30 weeks. But the funny thing is, we've never been in the charts until now.
MEL - I don't suppose there is any remote chance of you telling how many copies you've sold of your program, is there?
JOHN - Why not, I've got nothing to hide. In fact I'd be pleased for you to tell the world. Since its release in August 1987, we've sold an average of 600 copies a week. We sold a few more over Christmas and sales have been dropping a bit since then.
MEL - How many copies have you sold in the week where you've gone up the charts?
JOHN - Not the 'charts', we don't show in the Top 30 or whatever of any other chart, it's just Gallup that I'm talking about. Current sales? Last week we sold 400 copies, so that's two-thirds of what we were doing before Christmas.
MEL - Thank you. Is there anything else you've noticed that is peculiar about the Gallup Best-Seller Chart?
JOHN - The whole thing is peculiar! There's US Gold claiming to have flogged 250,000 copies of *Out Run*,



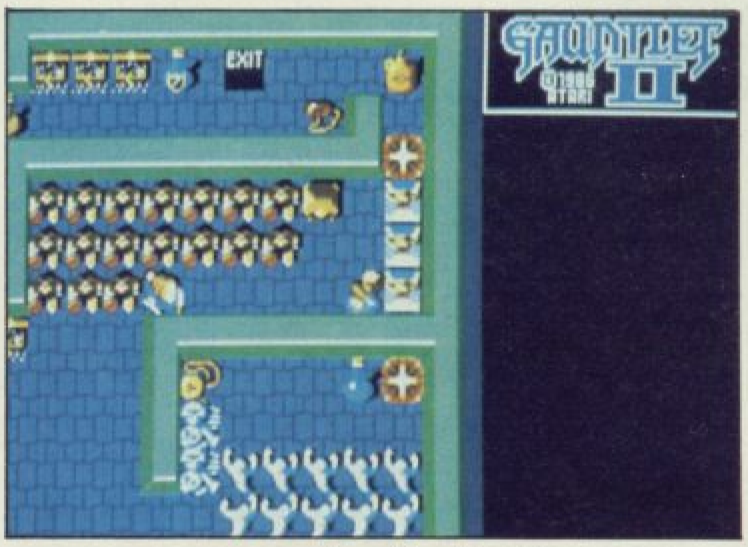
and they've been in the Gallup Chart for a couple of months. I make that something over 30,000 copies a week, right? And there we are, climbing up towards the Top Ten, and I swear to you we are selling 400 to 600 copies a week. Makes you wonder, doesn't it. There's something else I'd like you to explain to me.
MEL - I'll try.
JOHN - How come *Paperboy* was in that chart for 68 weeks without any advertising? That's what I want to know. You answer me that and I'll be able to sleep at night.
MEL - Sorry, you'll have to stick to Horlicks to get you to sleep, because I haven't got the faintest idea.

Mind you, I didn't leave these questions unanswered for long. The obvious thing to do was to talk to the Man from Gallup himself.

"How come *Paperboy* was in that chart for 68 weeks without any advertising?"

SIMON TREASURE

MEL - *Out Run*, *Paperboy* and *Gauntlet*, what are the real sales figures, Simon? And how does a title selling less than 600 copies a week and falling manage to be climbing up your Top 20?
SIMON - *Out Run*? 150,000 to 175,000 sold so far. *Gauntlet* a quarter



of a million. *Paperboy* 230,000 sales in the UK. 600 copies a week and in our Top 20? Sure, why not? It isn't a very big market you know. The vast majority of chart titles achieve somewhere between 15,000 and 30,000 units sold. If you hit over 50,000 you can strap on your laughing tackle.
MEL - So it's like the music business. The top five or so titles sell squillions, and the rest can chart with far lower sales.
SIMON - Right! It's more like the LP market, the way the sales curve drops off below the top five or ten. Yes, you can certainly get into the Top 20 with sales of 600 a week, no problem.
MEL - What about the other charts, let's take an example of a particular title, how about *Garfield*?
SIMON - There ARE no other charts! If you mean Microdealer's chart, it's purely a distributor chart, don't make me laugh. And *Garfield* can be at Number One three weeks before Smiths stock it.
MEL - How easy is it to hype a title into your chart?
SIMON - I'm not going to dodge that question. If you want to, it *is* conceivably possible. They call it 'aggressive marketing' don't they? But I don't think that sales are large enough to justify the massive expense that a hype would take. But it's easy to monitor hype attempts. For example if we start seeing 20 kids buying ten copies each of a particular game, say, in North Yorkshire, we can spot that pretty soon. I have no evidence of coordinated hyping, not now.
MEL - Fair enough. Maybe I need to understand exactly how you compile the Gallup Top 50 Chart.
SIMON - I wish everyone understood! We've identified 24 different categories of software outlet. Some are obvious, like Smiths, Boots, Woolies, Menzies and so on. At the moment I am satisfied that we have acceptable levels of information from 18 of them.
MEL - Making unacceptable levels from six of them. That's 25% still to go.
SIMON - Gallup are investing in a lot of new hardware plus six months of programming to cover the independents and manipulate the chart.
MEL - 'Manipulate'! You don't mean that, do you?
SIMON - No, I should have said to 'understand' the chart, to handle all the input.
MEL - Of the four or five hundred independent software shops in the country, how many do you cover?
SIMON - 40 to 80 of them every week.
MEL - Why don't you include the massive sales that Boots handle in your Chart?
SIMON - A fair question. We don't sample Boots because we can't work out a way of not using their store manager's time. Boots just won't agree. It took them an amazing 15 YEARS to join the music charts! We are working on Centresoft as Boots exclusive suppliers.
MEL - What would you say if I stated that the charts are useless, and nobody would suffer if they all disappeared.
SIMON - Most of them are useless, but Gallup is different. I've been charting software since May 1983. I was the first person to supply a proper chart. I am telling you that even though the games industry is very small, and there are less than ten serious characters, there are a lot of smaller outfits. If Gallup disappeared, you'd be left with multiple distributor charts, full of misinformation and false information. You'd be in the bloody Dark Ages.
MEL - You are saying that smaller companies need your chart to give them credibility?
SIMON - Right. They need it to prove that they are part of a real market, and that they are a real company.
MEL - Final question. Firebird, Code Masters, Alternative. How can you monitor them in the present circumstances?
SIMON - We haven't got the information from them, so we don't know how they stand, so we make assumptions. This is not satisfactory.
MEL - Thank you.

"If Gallup disappeared, you'd be left with misinformation . . . You'd be in the bloody Dark Ages."

I still think that the so-called Best Seller Charts are a load of old cobblers, but I can see the undeniable use of a well-regulated, well-respected software chart, and it seems to me that Gallup are getting their act together. The publishers of this magazine do not support Gallup and have never put money into it, preferring to publish what ZZAP! 64 or CRASH readers vote for in terms of a games' popularity, broken down into logical categories like Strategy, Hotline and Adventure. These charts may well be a load of old cobblers too, but are intended to reflect who is playing what game, as opposed to how many are being bought. All I am going to say is that if anyone tells me that today's charts cannot be hyped, I get a crinkly mouth. They can be. And I know a man who's done it. To be quite honest with you, I know several.

YOUR SECOND CHANCE TO GRAB SOME AMIGA ACTION!

WIN AN AMIGA A500 AND COLOUR MONITOR COURTESY OF THE GAMES MACHINE!



As we announced in the last issue, THE GAMES MACHINE has three Amiga A500 Computers and three 1081 Colour Monitors to give away as prizes. One set has already gone to the lucky winner of last month's competition, but here's a second chance for readers, and there will be a third go next month. As it's a well-known fact that all Amiga owners are highly intelligent (and generally quite wealthy too) this competition presents you with a marvellous opportunity to become richer and cleverer all at the same time. You know it makes sense . . .

You probably know all about the Amiga already, but if you're a bit hazy on exactly why it is the most sophisticated home computer around, there's a full run down in TGM001 on its features. Now is definitely the time to have an Amiga too – the initially sluggish software base is a thing of the past and apart from all the excitement of graphics, text-handling and music utilities, there are some of excellent games available, and many more being released over the next few months – just check out the previews . . .

Anyway, to prove you are clever enough to deserve an Amiga, answer the following questions correctly – then it's down to a matter of luck! First correct entry pulled from Oliver Frey's airbrush compressor box wins!

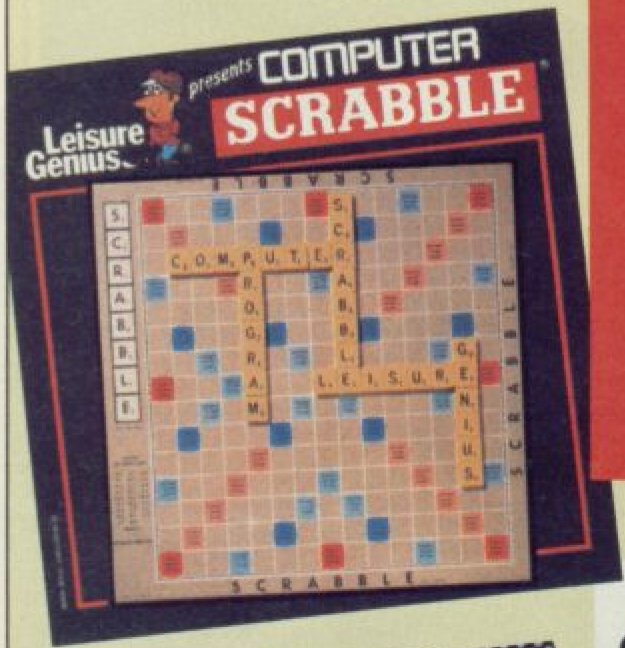
Write the answers down on a postcard, or back of a sealed envelope, together with your name and address, and send it to: **AMIGA COMP II, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than April 21 – which just happens to be the date TGM006 goes on sale with your third and final chance to win an Amiga. Our usual competition rules apply, check the masthead for details.

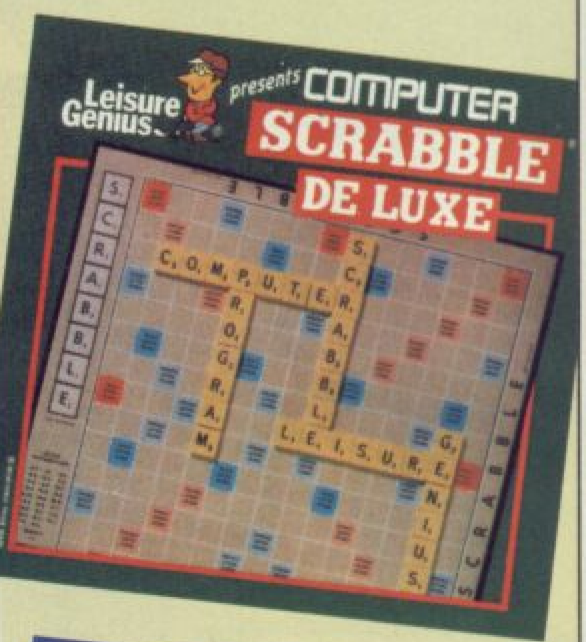
1. Add the Spectrum review percentages of PREDATOR and CYBERNOID to those of the Commodore FRIGHTMARE and TASK III, then divide the result by the percentage for Sega GLOBAL DEFENSE and add the price of the Atari ST DUNGEON MASTER. What's the answer (correct to five decimal places)?
2. How many games featured in TGM004 were licensed from one company to another?
3. The Amiga version of *Mercenary* from Novagen software is reviewed this issue, name all the other computer formats for which it has been available.

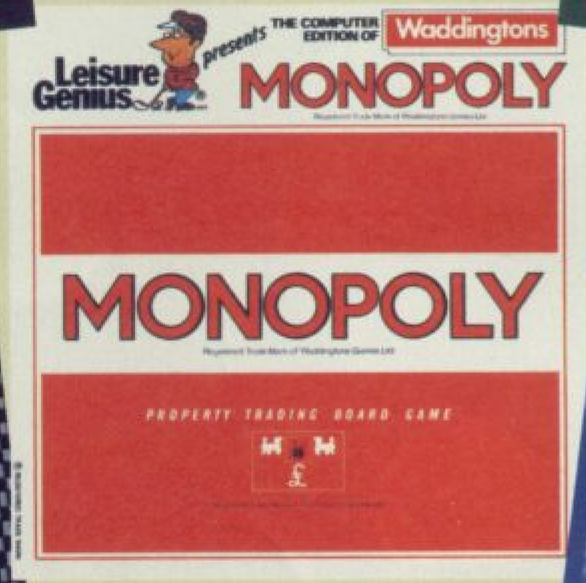
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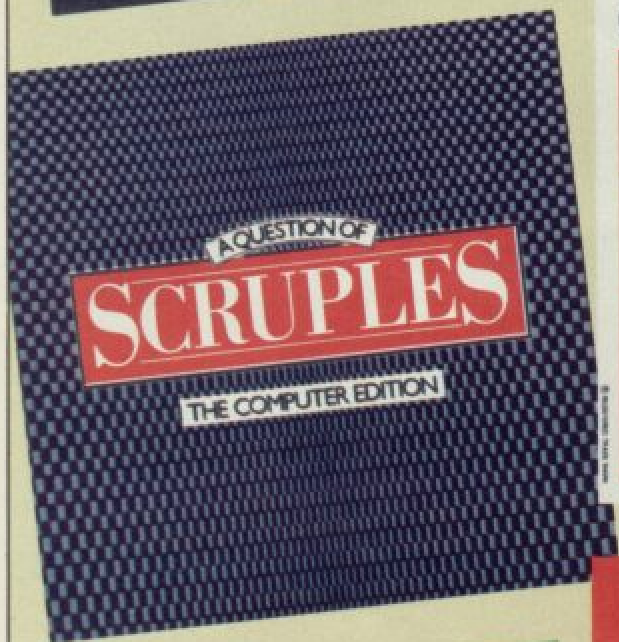


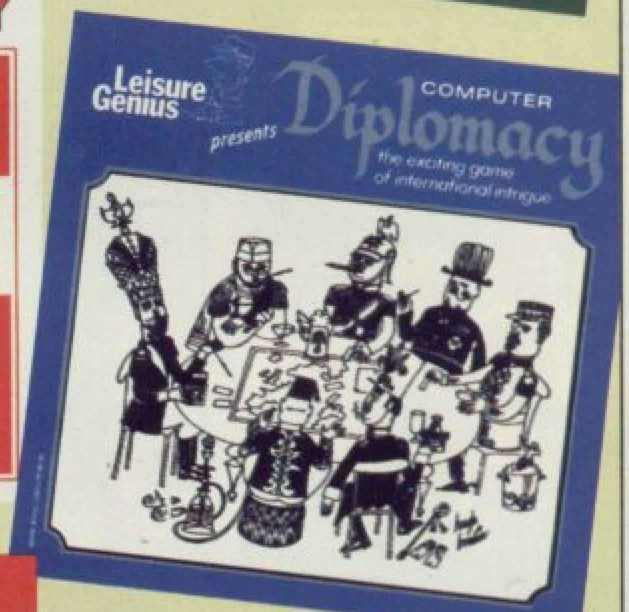
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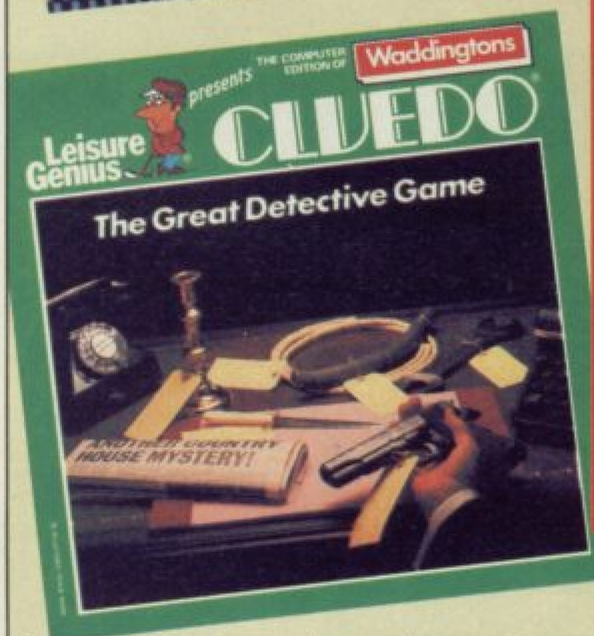


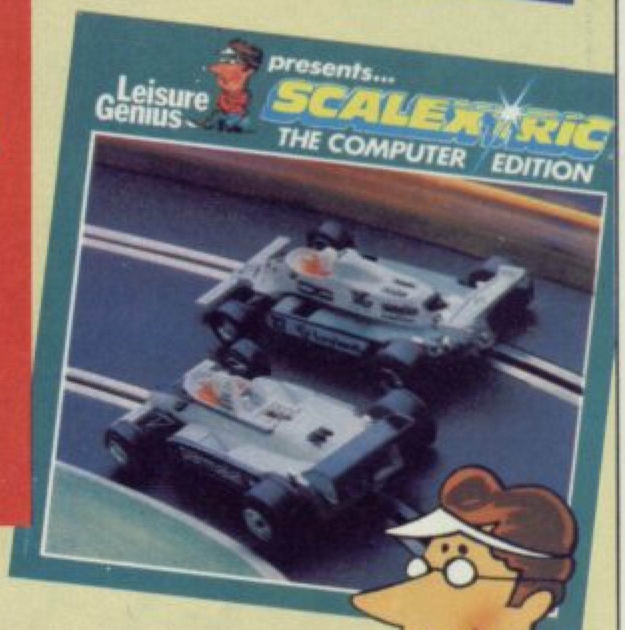




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Commodore 64/128	C	D	C	D	C	–	C	D	C	E	C	D	–	H
Spectrum 48	A	–	A	–	A	–	A	–	–	–	A	–	–	–
Spectrum 128/+2/+3	A	D	A	–	A	–	A	–	B	E	A	D	–	–
Amstrad CPC 464	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	–	–	A	–	–	–
Amstrad CPC 6128	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	–	E	–	D	–	–
Amstrad PCW 8256	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	F	–	–	–	–
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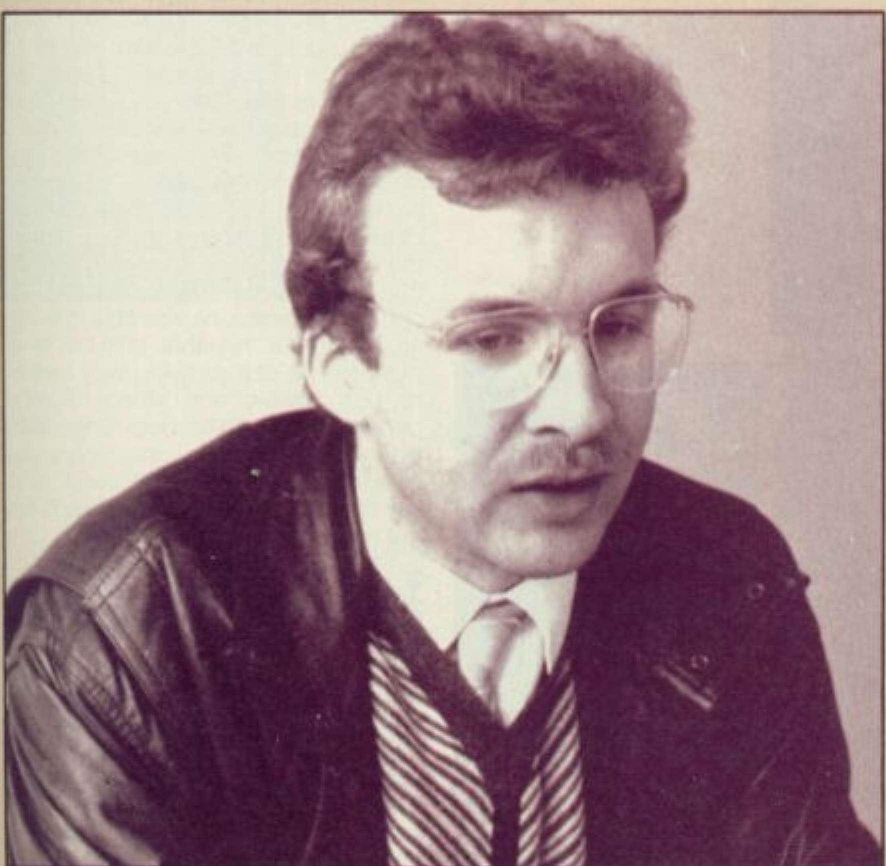
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ON BEING AN ELITIST

British entertainment software is coming of age; last month we featured Rare Ltd on a recruiting drive, this month we turn our beady eye on Elite Systems who have been, and still are, looking for talented games designers. The West Midlands software house has gone into overdrive, and somewhere in its future there could be Nintendo too. Roger Kean took a look, Cameron Pound took the pictures.

Elite has been around for a long time by games software standards, though not quite as long as 'those guys down the road', as Elite's boss Steve Wilcox refers to the brothers Stamper, featured in last month's articles on the old Ultimate and the new Rare; and though coming from a very different background, Steve now considers the two companies may have something in common – an interest in things Japanese.



. . . organised games software development was beginning, and the family saw a viable market just opening up.

The Elite story really starts early in 1984 when adverts for a Spectrum game called *Blue Thunder* appeared, plugging the name of Richard Wilcox. The artwork was decidedly slick by the standards of those days, and when the game arrived, so were its graphics. It earned its young teenage programmer the accolade of a CRASH Smash. It also set a course for a company that did not yet exist – the path of big-name licenses.

Richard Wilcox Software never reappeared, but his big brother Steve, and father Brian, did. The age of organised games software development was beginning, and the family saw a viable market just opening up. Capitalising on Richard's programming knowledge – he designed some of the first games for the new company before developing a greater interest in playing music – they formed Elite Systems Ltd.

Kokotoni Wilf, a Spectrum title, was first, and had the distinction of being one of the first to be consciously and specifically designed for an audience who were being perceived to like playing a particular type of game. The type was personified by *Jet Set Willy*, and in a disarmingly frank manner, Elite's advertising copy literally claimed that *Kokotoni Wilf* was out to match, or beat, Matthew Smith's giant Spectrum hit. That it failed to do so critically – it received 84% in CRASH, no mean rating – was not to deter the fledgeling software house, because the Wilcoxes were not thinking like so many of their competitors – all or nothing on one success – they were looking much more to the long-term and wanted a formula which would create successes.

Neither Steve nor Brian would ever claim to be computer programmers, and they certainly had not come from the 'back bedroom' school of games developers – Brian's background was firmly set in the Midlands metal foundry business – so they came to entertainment software as publishers, treating it as a business. This led to a totally different approach from what was mostly happening at the time; instead of saying, oh here's a great game idea, they looked at the market, the magazines, the reviews, decided what seemed popular, and then set out to create a game to satisfy the demand, marketing the product aggressively to create the sales. *Kokotoni Wilf* was a very successful experiment, it just wasn't *quite* right.

TYING UP

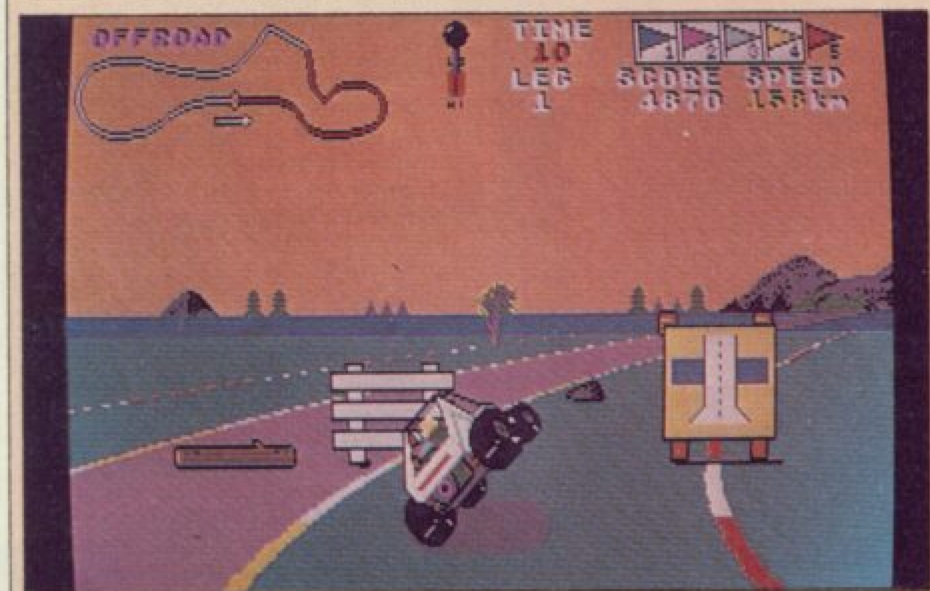
So Elite can take credit for being first to see the advantages in licensing popular film or TV titles; Richard's *Blue Thunder* had been loosely based around the theme of the big feature film of the same name, but for their next three titles, Elite left nothing to chance, tying up firm deals to license some of the most popular American series on British television at the time. The first two, *The Fall Guy* and *Dukes Of Hazzard* were hardly rated as great hits, but with the third, Elite hit the critical jackpot and *Airwolf* was a CRASH Smash.

In the field, only one other software house was really beginning to compete in the race for licensing deals, and that was Ocean – of whom Steve ruefully says: 'They are always typically three months ahead of everyone else' – another company that saw itself in the role of publisher. The licensing game has come in for a lot of criticism from a public who

PRESS ANY KEY

began to feel they were getting second-rate games and having to pay top prices to account for the cost of the licence deal. It is a criticism that so often fails to take account of the really excellent product that has appeared as a result of licensing, but if the public would soon become weary of tie-ins, the software houses wouldn't. Two factors were in their favour – and still are – first, it makes the most of advertising opportunities; Elite could capitalise on *Airwolf* being a top-rated weekly TV show: second, whatever complaints were made, and however poorly a game may have rated in reviews, sales showed a different pattern – they were big.

This situation quickly taught Elite that magazine reviews were not everything – they might have reflected on the company's public media profile, but not necessarily on its sales. And so, over the years, Elite Systems has been almost synonymous with licensed games. They have licensed big TV series, big names; Frank Bruno – big events; The Grand National – big coin-ops; *Ghosts And Goblins*, *Buggy Boy*, you name it – even racing tyres; Dunlop.



All this product brought Elite into their first real phase of growing up as a company. Licensing brand-names can be a touchy business. The product owner does not want to be made a fool of, and the sort of control the publisher then has to exercise over the game development, militates against sub-contracting the programming. In 1985 Elite recruited programmers and graphic artists, but it was not a perfect arrangement, as Steve says: 'When we did have in-house programmers we experienced all the problems that everybody else experienced at those times. And we made the decision that we would use contract development sources.'

Thus the company entered a second phase characterised by long periods of quiet punctuated by some very powerful releases, the likes of *Ghosts And Goblins* and *Paper Boy*. The use of freelance teams is best illustrated by two games which conveniently come at the start of the period and at the end – *Scooby Doo* and *Thundercats*, both developed for Elite by neighbouring Gargoyle Games. *Scooby* had eluded Elite's in-house team for months, but Gargoyle knocked the idea into a very different, but reasonably successful shape – at least Elite was able to recoup the money spent on the licence.



But as the hugely successful *Thundercats* hit the 8-bit marketplace, Elite was already well into a third phase, a retransformation into a company with heavy staffing on the development side. Which brings us to today.

DOWN MEMORY ARCADE

The modern Elite is a very much more confident outfit than the one that produced *Kokotoni Wilf*, or even the one that struggled over, and nearly lost, *Scooby Doo*. Steve Wilcox thinks they have learnt from their management mistakes, and that despite making those, because all through they maintained a powerful presence when it came to snapping up decent licences, the company is now ready to tackle a new era of expansion. Most importantly, they have learned that there is a massive worldwide market for Elite ideas, whether it be through selling the product direct, or by licensing it to third-party publishers. However, that means developing original games, not something Elite has been noted for of late with all the coin-op conversions. But as Steve explains, the potential for a coin-op is limited to the UK market generally.

"We're looking to provide a career path for those lads, rather than them being in the business of conversions .."

'The coin-op publishers are becoming interested in pursuing the market themselves,' he claims. 'Some of them have already set up their own consumer divisions in the US. Capcom are already writing Commodore versions of their coin-op games. I don't think it will be too long before they're bringing their own conversions into the European market, and in that case the best we get out of it is the sales and distribution deals.

'So we took the view twelve months ago that there was no long-term future for us in coin-op licences, that we would have to begin developing our own sources. Now having identified that as an objective what we had to think about next was how do we do it?'

LOOKING FOR TALENT

The method decided upon meant creating a pool of reliable in-house software designers – the ideal situation where everyone can feed off the excitement of each other's ideas. But first time round this very situation created problems. The solution was simple: tighter management control of both the programmers and of production. Step one was to increase Elite's management structure and so Geoff Grimes was appointed as marketing manager. Geoff's background in the pop music business, and later marketing within the growing video industry, meant that though he knew little about computer games, he was able to bring an outsider's valuable attitude to a business he saw as being very similar to both music and video. Geoff's primary task was to help Steve and Brian reshape Elite, streamline its activities, identify market areas, and set up an internal structure ready for the new staff.

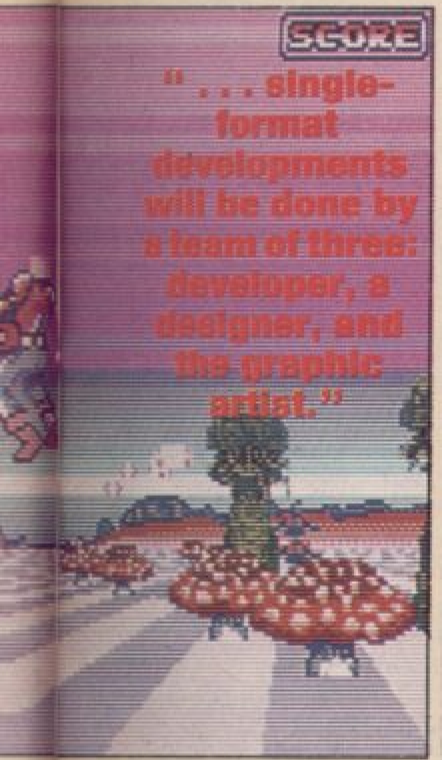
Step two was to employ George Yapp as software development manager. George's experience was with Kalamazoo, a company producing computerised office systems, where he managed a team of 50, experience that equips him well to deal with Elite's large development team. Together, the expanded management team began to select suitable candidates for the top software jobs, the positions of software supervisors. It meant, about a year ago, that they were in the odd position where, as Steve says: 'We had, I think, about ten people in management or supervisory positions and virtually no programmers!'

But that situation has changed with a strong recruitment drive – one that has not quite finished. Elite is still on the lookout for talented designers, programmers and computer graphic artists.

So how does the new setup operate?







" . . . single-format developments will be done by a team of three: developer, a designer, and the graphic artist."



" . . . there was no long-term future for us in coin-op licences, we had to begin developing our own sources."

A BUSY YEAR AHEAD

Anyone who joins Elite is facing a busy year, as the company's emphasis switches to producing single-format original games, mostly for 16-bit machines and with an eye on the Nintendo too. They reckon to release no less than 18 multi-format titles and a dozen single-format games. For those already in place at the development tables and in the marketing department, the next few weeks will be hectic. *Ikari Warriors* is ready – the Spectrum version arrived for review as this article was being completed – complete with a brand new large-size box, which Elite will be using from now on, enabling them to add more elements to the packaging.

The there is the compilation *Top 10 Collection*, ten back catalogue Elite games for £9.95, another compilation – *Six-Pak 3*, which features: *Enduro Racer*, *Dragon's Lair*, *Singe's Castle*, *Ghosts And Goblins*, *Paper Boy* and *Living Daylights* – all for £9.95 as well. The next multi-format release, *Beyond The Ice Palace* – an original title – will be available for Commodore, Amstrad, Spectrum and ST. The ST *Buggy Boy* is all but completed, so is *Space Harrier* and *Thundercats*. The latter is being tweaked because it has proved too difficult in the earlier levels. And of course, there is its Nintendo counterpart; the game has been considerably reshaped and rewritten for the Nintendo debut.

If this is not enough, the development teams are working on numerous other projects. One includes the Spectrum *Buggy Boy*; still in its early stages, the graphics are looking amazingly good with a real feel for movement, hills and cornering. Hills seem to be a current obsession on the top floor at Aldridge. Three simultaneous experiments are taking place using hidden horizons to create an entirely new form of road racing game. The primary machine is Commodore 64, and the development is an extension of techniques learned during the design of *Buggy Boy* – the echoes are on Amstrad and ST. It looks very clever, but Elite will not commit to any dates yet.

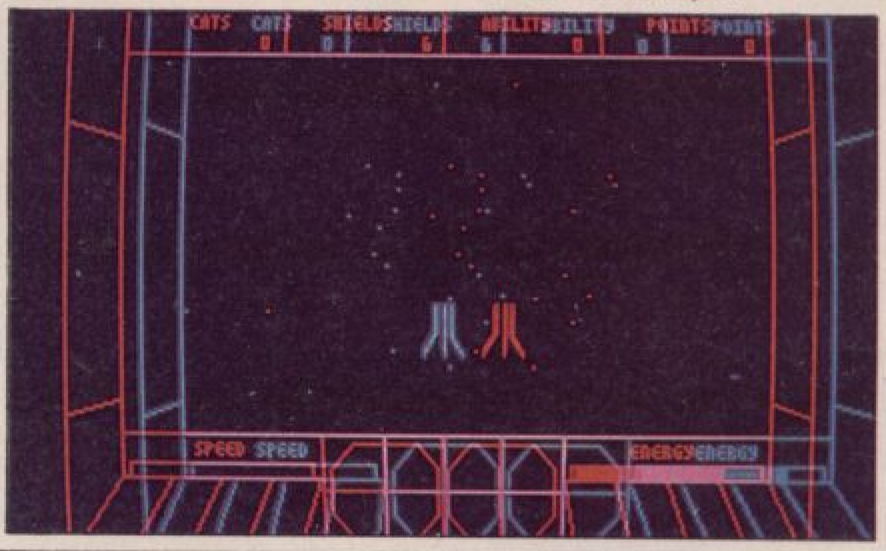


Several other Commodore 64 original titles are in development too, but again, it is too far off for any hard information.

One really fascinating game, which is almost ready for release, is in real 3-D. Called *Wanderer*, it uses high-speed wireframe graphics duplicated in red and blue. When viewed through the supplied opposing 3-D glasses, the result is truly spatial. The guys at Elite are delighted with it, not only because it is the first true representation of 3-D on a home computer, but also because it really works!

Wanderer was written in France for, of all things, the QL, then converted to the ST. Ian Upton has done some redesigning and Elite's programmers have now converted it for the Spectrum and Amstrad – where the effect is just as good. The object of the game is to beat aliens in the centre of the galaxy, and to do that you have to construct a weapon, and to construct a weapon you have to fly around different parts of the galaxy and collect different bits of machinery. It does not rely on the gimmickry of the 3-D, but uses the technique to wrap around a truly complex and involving strategy/shoot-'em-up. One to watch out for.

Another multi-format game being developed on the ST is *Aquablast*. It is a river racing shoot-'em-up – boat games seem to have been out of fashion recently – and all we saw of it was some very early static screen designs, and of course the gigantic work document detailing how it will look and play. The release of that one is still some way off.



'The way we've split things up at the office,' Steve explains, 'we have groups of people responsible for various functions: we've got a design department and a design supervisor, a graphics department, a graphics supervisor; each of the machines we write for – Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad, ST etc – has a supervisor. Most, but not all, of those supervisory positions have been filled.

'And then we've got the hands-on guys, the designers, graphic artists and the programmers themselves. I think currently we have 26-28 people, and we're getting close the the limit we can accommodate, which is probably something in the order of 35.'

ORIGINAL DESIGN

Elite is split into two offices: administration, distribution and accounts at their new Lichfield base some 20 miles north of Birmingham, and the program development at their old base in Aldridge, not far from Walsall. Between the two, Steve expects the company to be employing about 50 people when the last ten or so software appointments have been made.

'And in addition to that,' he goes on, 'we are working with a number of development houses, which means there are probably another 30 to 40 people who are working on a sub-contract basis.'

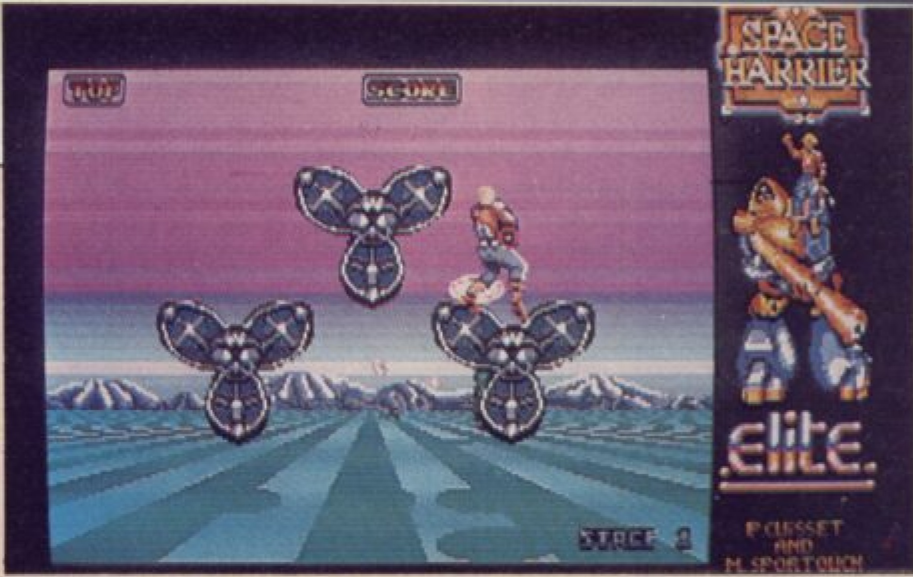
"We have to create product we can sell on a worldwide basis and not just a UK or European basis."

That is quite a lot of people. Given that sort of figure, how much product does he see Elite achieving?

'This year I think we should achieve 15, but we're aiming for 18 multi-format releases – they won't all be single-format games. We will see ten or twelve single-format releases, and then the balance will be compilations or various conversions of back catalogue onto new machines.'

But for the future, Elite will be

PRESS ANY KEY



concentrating on developing original games (although Steve is at pains to point out that coin-op conversions are still good business, and Elite is looking to secure titles, but not on a package deal basis as other companies still do), and it is in this area that Elite is banking on its new structure to produce good results. First they looked first at doing multi-format products simultaneously – something Gremlin Graphics have done for three years, very successfully – but rejected the notion because, as Steve says: 'One of the problems with that is when the designers are sitting down and considering how they should design something, they are constantly considering the limitations of each individual machine. So either the coding is compromised or the design is compromised, because you don't design up to the top machine but take the lowest common denominator.'

CREATIVE PROCESS

They reached the conclusion that for original games a single format should be produced, ideally 16-bit to give the best implementation of any design; and then go to the next stage – the conversion.

Steve wants to keep this originating single-format development in-house because the first version is the most difficult to produce, and it is a creative process rather than an industrial one, which doing conversions tends to be. This in turn gives their own programmers more interesting work to look forward too – only one of the incentives Steve sees in working for Elite.

How does the in-house team operate when developing a new game?

'The single-format developments will be done by a team of three: the developer (who also needs to be a capable programmer – the sort of person who has been involved in doing conversions, or maybe original games on his own or with somebody else's design); a designer, who is really responsible for formalising what's going on at various stages in the game's development, throwing ideas in, discussing it with the programmer and the graphic artist, and then producing a development document; and the third guy is the graphic artist.'

The development document Steve refers to, is one of the vital management tools Elite has instigated. Sometimes a document can be inches thick. Like a film script, each one details every aspect of the game from the packaging scenario to printer dumps of screen action, identifying potential problem areas for the team to consider. It also offers the opportunity to other format programmers to see what is happening, comment on problems and maybe come up with a solution that the primary team had failed to see.

CAREER PATHS

Under George Yapp, two people coordinate all the teams, Simon Cook and Ian Upton, both experienced games designers and programmers. Their function is to produce designs from scratch, or work with the single-format developers and formalise what is actually going into the design with the aid of the development documents.

Through structures like these, Elite is ensuring that the programming teams are fully supported all the way through the process. There is another benefit to the hierarchical structure too: 'By bringing people in, initially as trainees,' Steve says, 'subsequently as conversion programmers and ultimately as senior product development programmers, we're looking to provide a career path for those lads, rather than them being in the business of conversion after conversion after conversion, which is what a lot programmers spend their time doing. And when the guys make it up to the stage of being development programmers, they're then in the situation of having a strong influence over what they're producing, which I think is an important consideration as far as giving them opportunities is concerned.'

"There's no question of us changing the emphasis of the business from full-price . . . "

But Steve points out that there is still more to the supervisory capacity than organising and chasing. 'One thing which most software publishers in the country experience is that most developers, especially the programmers – but it's true of other disciplines too – are self-taught. Something we're actively working on at the moment is training. The supervisors are used, if you like, as a library and a reference point; a Spectrum programmer working on a conversion of a 16-bit game would be expected to sit down with his supervisor at the start of the project and plan all the work, and that would include looking at the design and writing various documents which would suggest how they intend the game should be produced. This also helps us produce a schedule, which the supervisors themselves can use to check progress.'

GOING WORLDWIDE

If Steve Wilcox sees the main advantages of single-format development being cost-effective and helpful to the programmers, he is also aware of the major advantage it also offers when it comes to the ever-expanding worldwide market – and in turn, again, to the programmers, who get a share in royalties. 'The benefits as far as the single-format developers are concerned are the ways in which that product can subsequently be exploited, not only in the number of territories we can sell it, but also the number of machines it can be converted for, including the Nintendo, which clearly we have to be aware of because it is the biggest single machine on a worldwide basis. And in some cases we will produce PC versions.'

Does he see the PC market expanding in the UK?

'We wouldn't speculatively produce PC product – we're looking at producing PC product when the 64 or 16-bit version has been sold to potential US sources, because the PC market is very much driven by the US.'

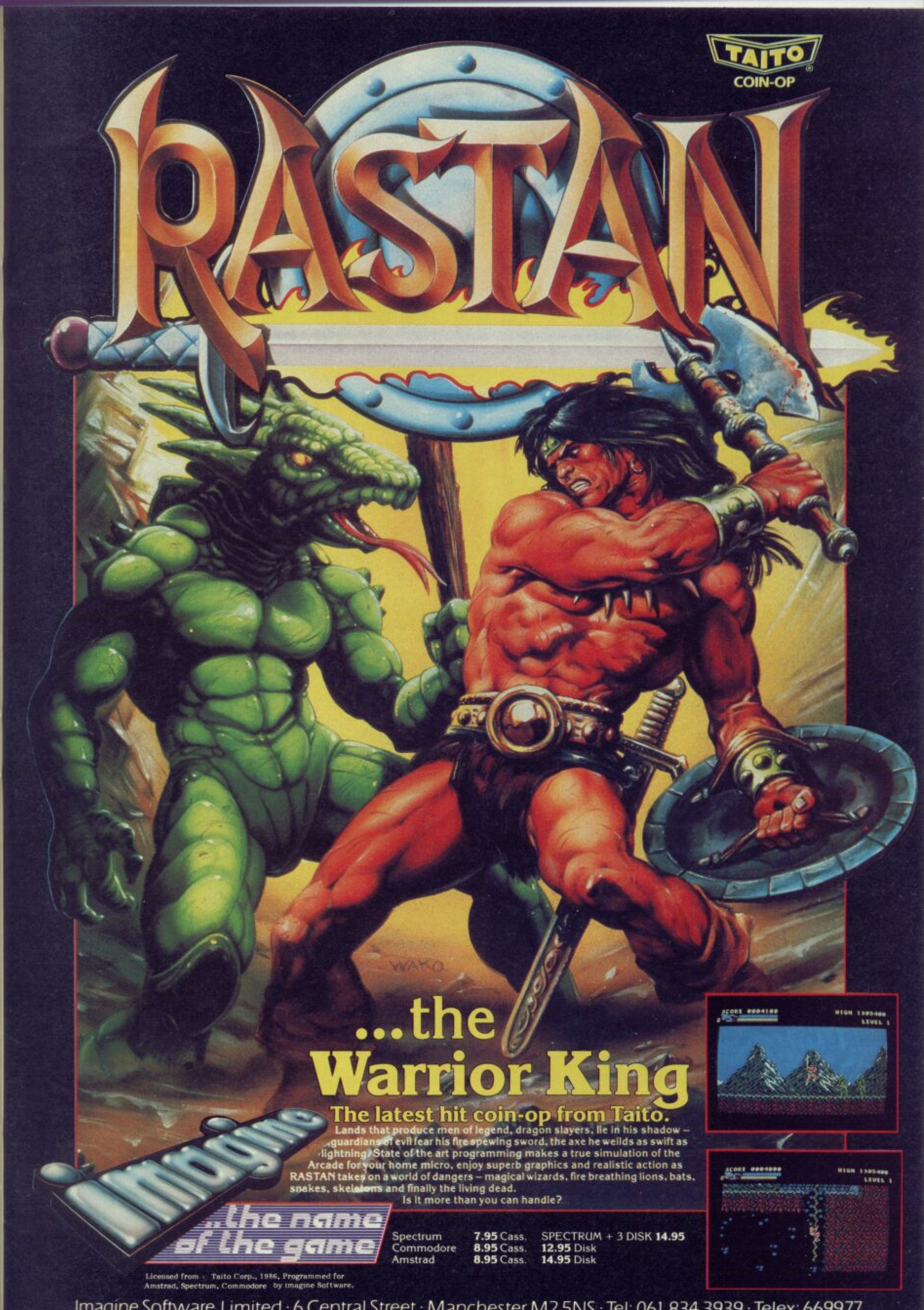
But one speculative project Elite has undertaken is to convert *Thundercats* for the Nintendo machine.

'Now although that's not relevant as far as the UK is concerned, the reason we produced that – and we are producing more Nintendo games – is that we've taken the long-term view that we have to create product we can sell on a worldwide basis and not just a UK or European basis. This was really a speculative development which started by reverse-engineering the machine just the same as the Stamper guys did it.

'It would be nonsense to suggest that this is a viable development for UK only, and it's not intended to be so. Our decision to do this was based on the success of the machine in Japan back in 1985, which was the first time I went there, and I brought some of the machines back with me. But it does fit in with what we want to do – and have been doing for the past twelve months – which is moving away from the complete dependence that we have had on coin-op games.

And what about Elite's sally into the budget market with the Classic Range? Peter Kury, an ex-Twang man, was recently appointed to look after Elite's budget sales. But Steve insists his job is to make the most of existing back catalogue titles while at the same time organise the very successful compilations the company has been doing recently.

'There's still a very strong market out there,' Steve insists. 'There's no question of us changing the emphasis of the business from full-price, we're still very much involved in producing full-price games. Neither are we taking the Rare route, which is we're not getting out of this market to go somewhere which is apparently more lucrative and perhaps less competitive. What we're looking to do is actually add on *that* business. I do expect this year to be a very strong year, and we have lots of reasons to be very optimistic, especially with a view to the new formats and new territories which previously we haven't been able to access.'


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NYUK, NYUK, NYUK! WHAT'S THIS MOE? YOU IDIOTS! IT'S THE THREE STOOGES COMP!



And rather an exclusive kinda competition it is too. To celebrate the launch of **Cinemaware**'s latest Computer Movie, *The Three Stooges*, THE GAMES MACHINE has joined forces with **Mirrorsoft**, who are marketing Cinemaware's product in the UK, to bring you the chance of winning the ultimate in Stoogemania souvenirs.

The prizes on offer here are rare, normally only obtainable from the Stoogestore, Philadelphia, US of A – but seeing as how you lot are the top-notch in computer magazine readers, we've arranged for them to be specially imported.

For the first prize winner there is a huge goodie-bag stuffed full with an assortment of Stooges stuff: there's a He-Man Shirt featuring scenes from past Stooges films, a T-shirt with the Stooges' faces on them, a Stooges poster, a Stooges keyring, a Three Stooges mug, Sticker packs and a set of The Three Stooges stand-ups. And there's more . . . 25 runners up will each receive a Stooge Memo-board and door-knob hanger and a 3-D comic book staring . . . well guess who.

With such rare, cult prizes, just think what winning this comp would do for your street-cred (we'd rather not . . .).

So get the noodles in your brainbox churning over, and answer these three questions, all of them Stooges orientated. Having answered them to the best of your ability, jot the answers down on a postcard or the back of a sealed custard pie – not forgetting your name and address, you idiot – and post it off to: **STOOGE COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than April 21. Anyone found not following the competition rules listed in the masthead will be forced to eat the freebie popcorn that Cinemaware has been sending out recently . . .

1. Name FOUR of the Three Stooges – it's not a trick question, there have been six in all

2. Apart from The Three Stooges, name two other Cinemaware products

3. What is Larry's favourite activity?
   a) computer programming
   b) bareback horse riding
   c) stamp collecting
   d) playing the fiddle

Please note that as the prizes are all being specially imported, neither Mirrorsoft nor THE GAMES MACHINE can fully guarantee the items mentioned will be obtainable as listed.

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ALL'S FAIR IN TOYS AND WAR

In the first of two reports, John Gilbert tells why some of 1988's toys are in for a rough ride.

Electronic games are out and furry things are in. That's the attitude I got from many of the manufacturers parading their wares at this year's recently-held British International Toy and Hobby Fair. The show, crammed to capacity on both floors of Earls Court, harked back to the so-called good old days with electric train sets, cuddly Pound Puppies and some incredibly lifelike dolls – of both sexes – who cried and wet their nappies both on and off cue.

Despite all the reflective bravado it was, again, the electronic toys that caused controversy. They create more realistic forms of entertainment every year and it is this reality factor which causes worried debate in Parliament and among those who think they have to guide the fragile minds of children away from nasty influences.

One such nasty, recently identified by an increasing number of MPs, psychologists, and British television programme buyers, is Mattel's *Captain Power And The Soldiers Of The Future*. It was on show at Earls Court and seemed innocuous enough on first inspection.

The package contains one of two types of plastic gun, an instruction booklet couched in American bravura, and a video tape. The tape introduces you to Captain Power through interactive video entertainment and gives you an opportunity to put your gun through its paces.

Captain Jonathan Power, for those of you who won't see the TV ads about him in coming months, is a rebel from the future. He lives on Earth of the 22nd century. The metal wars between humankind and robots have just ended and Earth is ruled by an evil mechanical monstrosity, Lord Dread, from his fortress palace called Volcania.

The dark lord is aided by four Commanders and a legion of Bio-mech robotic soldiers. Winged Sauron leads the attack from the air, Blastarr battles away on the ground, Tritor goes to it at sea and Dread Commander controls his evil master's land troops.

Captain Power has five assistants, all experts in a particular field of combat. There's Tank Ellis who leads the ground assault, air ace Hawk Masterson, intelligence officer Scout Baker, technical expert – and the only female member – Pilot Chase, and Colonel Stingray Jones who is guardian of the oceans. Notwithstanding the fact that these humans are the stars, the main feature of the package, and the one which the kids will no doubt beg for at Christmas, is the interactive gun – and here begins the controversy.

There are two types of gun: you play on the Power side with one and on the Dread side with the other – both are supplied with standard features – each weapon interacting with certain sections of the video tape broadcasts. Light signals are encoded into the on-screen targets and you score points by locking onto them and pressing fire. If you are on target, the light signal from the screen travels back to the gun which then beeps and your score is increased.

HUMAN TARGETS

The *Captain Power* introductory video is live action, so the targets on the screen are not computer animations but real humanoid figures – dressed as Dread robots. They will respond to your attacks if your gun catches the light signals from their laser fire, and your score is decreased. When it reaches zero a tiny cockpit is spat out of the gun to signal the game's over and you have lost.

TV mock battles are a lot less damaging to children than one-to-one cowboy battles . . .

Critics are worried about the influence of the gun on young children because of the 'live' targets. They argue that Mattel's toy is introducing kids to aggression at an early age, which could have a detrimental effect on their reactions to acts of violence.

Their case is further strengthened by the recent introduction to this country of the Captain Power television series by the Super Channel satellite television network, broadcasting from Europe. Each show lasts 30 minutes and, during a recent survey done by Channel Four television, two episodes contained 130 individual acts of violence in which the viewers could use their guns.

Parents of children who use the gun in the United States admit that the toy is very addictive, and there seems to be no saturation effect as with computer games, but they say that it is no different from the cap guns used in games cowboys and indians. And the guns' supporters believe that the TV mock battles are a lot less damaging to children than one-to-one cowboy battles or wars. Mattel's opponents, however, say that the distancing effect of a child firing a gun and the violent results of that action on a television screen may also insulate a child from the real nature of violence and make aggression more acceptable.

If the opponents lobby power is sufficient to get their concerns taken up in Parliament, Mattel could find its support from Super Channel through the *Captain Power* TV series taken

The toy sensation of 1988, yells Mattel – interactive TV action with Captain Power



away.

The government is currently looking at measures to control satellite entertainment within Britain and one of the problems it is debating is violence and its effects on children. The addition of interaction with that violence may make them think twice about allowing *Captain Power* to continue on satellite television in its early morning time slot. If, because of government pressure, the show was to be moved to a later slot Super Channel's young 'target' audience would decrease.

Super Channel is keen to make sure that the Captain stays at the top of the ratings and doesn't be seen to smack of commercialism. Network bosses have ordered that advertisements for the Mattel gun or related products should not be shown within an hour before or after the broadcast of the adventure series. It also defends the violent aspects of the series by stating it is no worse than an American cops and robbers or space series on one of the major British TV networks.

Mattel remains unruffled by the dispute and in any case would not lose out seriously if Captain Power's television exploits were in any way censored. The interactive guns can be used in a gun-to-gun manner similar to those in the Lazer Tag and Photon games.

. . . the kids will no doubt beg for the interactive gun – and here begins the controversy.

THE POWER RANGE

So sure is Mattel of the British success of *Captain Power* that the company plans to release a range of interactive Power toys and play figures, the first of which is the **Power On Energiser**. It is attached to the Captain Power figure and can be activated manually or by the Power On sequence on the video tape. When switched on the Power symbol on the Captain's chest lights up.

The **Scandroid/TRAC 5000** is another light-activated toy. It is Captain Power's radar-assisted targetting cyborg which detects any moving object in its path and fires a real, but harmless, infra-red beam. **Blastpack** is a one-man army weapon which shoots an infra-red beam and destroys airborne threats.

Finally, the **Sky Bike** is Captain Power's supersonic cycle. It has a battle sensor which detects danger at a distance of up to 10 feet away from the television screen and 20 feet away from other Captain Power toys.

Mattel says to look out for most of those toys in the summer and, no doubt, we can also look forward to more heated debates concerning interactive television.

RADICAL ROBOTS

Another form of interactive, though less controversial, toy at the Toy Fair was the miniature robot.

Tomy's were the most useful and diverse in appearance. The 'bot family are as at home in the office as they are at home. **Chatbot**, for instance, is a radio controlled robot who wheels around moving his arms. A unique recording system allows you to leave messages with him which he can play back to amaze your family and friends.

Spotbot can carry small objects around and do doggy things such as yap . . .

The other three 'bots are more for fun than utility. **Crackbot** stands seven inches tall and moves around in a manic dance of hands and head. There's no remote control console for this one, but a clap of your hands makes him perform. **Dingbot** is similar to Crackbot, but acts as if he is continually lost. He constantly carries a map – upside down – and reverses if he bumps into objects or walls. Tomy states with mechanical tongue in plastic cheek that he would be quite intelligent if it wasn't for his sense of direction.



A yapping bundle of fun and no mess on the carpet or hairs on the chairs – Spotbot

My favourite 'bot, however, has got to be **Spotbot**. He looks like a mechanical dog and is just the sort of obedient pet I need. Spotbot can carry small objects around and do doggy things such as yap and chase his tail if he bumps into anything.

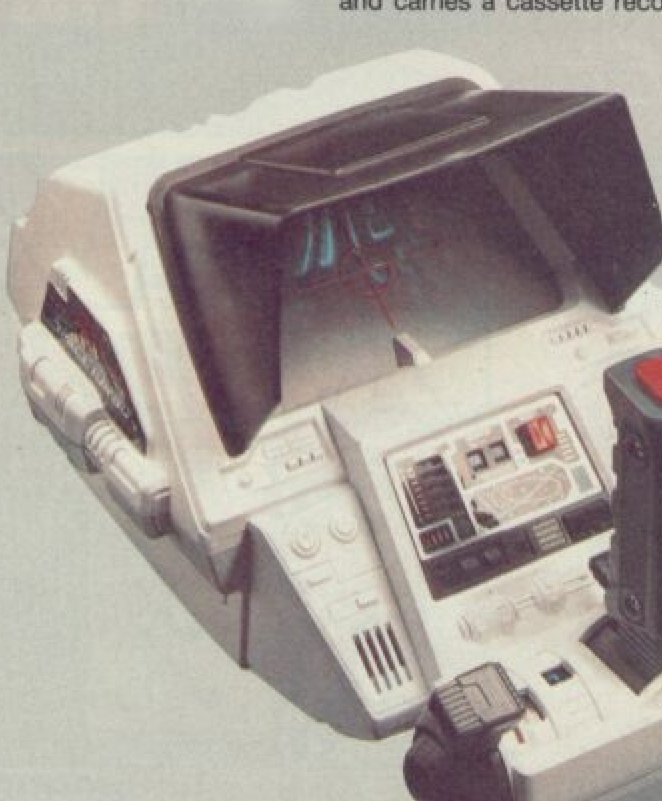
If you want a robot with more serious purposes in mind there's always the Omni series, which also comes from Tomy. All of these robots have hand-held remote control sets to turn them in all directions and make their arms and heads move.

Each Omni has a set of individual features. **Omni Junior** is the smallest of the range with a cheeky personality all of his own. He shakes hands or goes off and sulks depending on his mood, and can also tell you what he is thinking.

Omnibot is the mid-range robot and carries a cassette recorder into which you can put a tape of programmed movement instructions or music to be played through his mouth. The big daddy of the family, **Omni 2000**, also has a built-in cassette recorder but is more sophisticated than Omnibot. He can tell you the time, fetch a drink for you or allow you to listen to your favourite music.

All these Tomy robots, which should be available in high streets by late spring, are powered by calculator batteries and not tied to the mains.





Tomy's battery-driven Turnin' Space Turbo console

BEHIND THE CONTROLS

Robots are amusing but I found it good to get behind the controls of two other Tomy innovations, the **Turnin' Turbo Dashboard** and the **Space Turbo**.

Turnin' Turbo is an arcade motor racing simulation built into a steering wheel-and-dashboard control system. Everything you want to control the car is there; ignition key, automatic gear shift and indicators for mileage, fuel and number of miles travelled.

If you prefer to fight the aliens in outer space then the Space Turbo console is for you. During the game you use joystick and thruster controls to pursue alien craft down the corridors of a space city. Again, there are indicators, this time showing your speed, energy and the amount of thrust you are using.

MOVING ON

The Toy Fair contains dozens of new electronic games, far too many to feature in one article. So, next month I will be showing off the latest 3-D arcade modules, arcade games from Konami now shrunk down to briefcase size, radio-controlled travel, a futuristic look for the humble train set, an upgradable chess computer, and games which cross boards with electronics.

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COMPUTER & ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT

REVIEWS

Not only has a lot of software been released these past four weeks, but an inconvenient number of games have appeared for only one or another format, which makes it hard for us to fit them all in! However, we have squeezed as much as we could into the issue; 31 games reviews in all, but that sill leaves more than 25 we could not review. Sorry if we missed out something you wanted to read about. BUT just look at the selection we have got – specialities of the house this month come on both 8- and 16-bit formats, with *Ferrari Formula One* on the Amiga, *Firefly* on the trusty old Spectrum and Commodore and probably the best role-playing game on computer – *Dungeon Master* on the ST.

It would appear that simulations are established as being back in fashion again; there are five featured this month, giving you a taste of flight, racing, military and mountain climbing. Shoot-'em-up addicts need hardly worry though, there's plenty of mainstream arcade action as we lift the lids on *Firefly*, *Xenon*, *XR35*, *Predator*, *Magnetron* and *Cybernoid*. This month's breakout game, as promised last month, is *Revenge Of Doh*. It's not as stodgy as the name may sound, but you can always wash it down with a drop of arcade adventure from Dexter and Scooter in *Get Dexter II* or *Golden Path*.

LEAD REVIEWS

DUNGEON MASTER

The Americans have been working wonders with the Atari ST recently. As we saw last month, the highest rating in this issue goes to a US software house; **FTL**'s the name, and the name of the game's *Dungeon Master* – the ultimate in computer role-playing. It grabs a 94% rating.

PAGE 64

FERRARI FORMULA ONE

For Amiga owners we have reviewed the most elite of racing simulations, a fascinatingly detailed experience both on and off the world's leading circuits. *Ferrari Formula One* comes from **Electronic Arts** and features everything you could want from such a game.

PAGE 60

FIREFLY

The highest rated 8-bit game this issue is from **Special Effects/ Ocean**. *Firefly* is a great shoot-'em-up, packed with excitement and adrenalin-pumping action that should do any Spectrum or Commodore 64/128 owner's collection a power of good.

PAGE 72

BEYOND ZORK

The *Zork* Trilogy has sold nearly one million copies – and now adventurers can go *Beyond Zork* with **Infocom**'s latest addition to the range. A bit of a change in style, too, both in presentation and in the inclusion of role-playing elements.

ADVENTURE PAGES

XENON

Arcade-perfect! came the cry from the drooling mouths of our reviewers. **Melbourne House**'s straight download from the Arcadia coin-op ends up superbly on the Amiga and ST, proving itself as the best 16-bit blaster so far.

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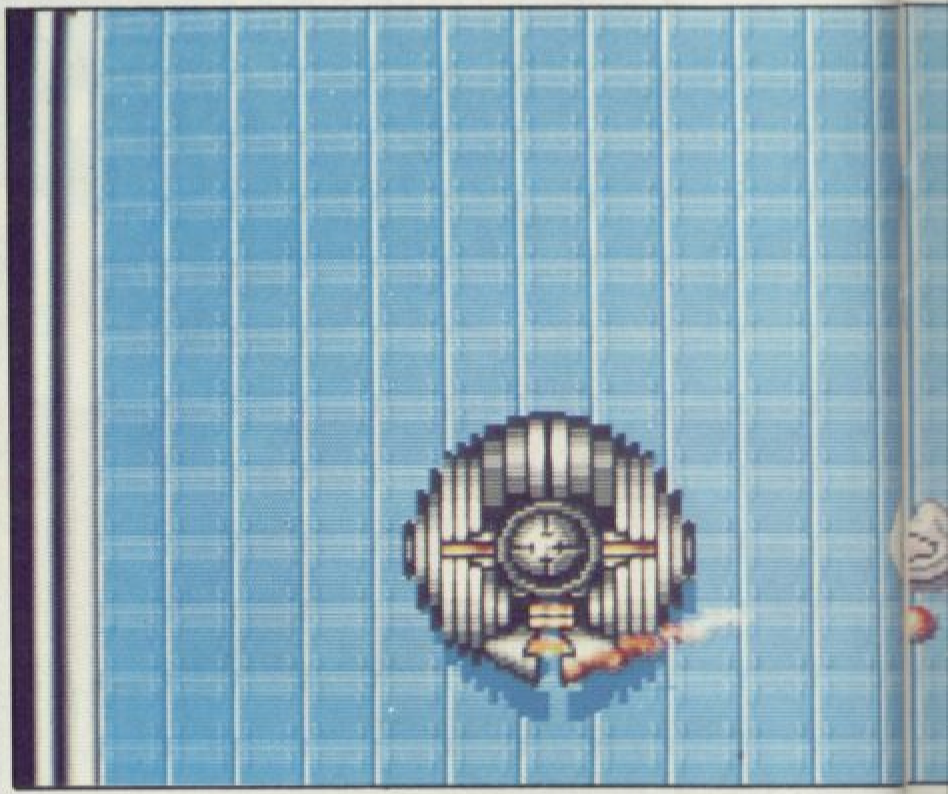
COIN-OP PERF

XENON
Melbourne House

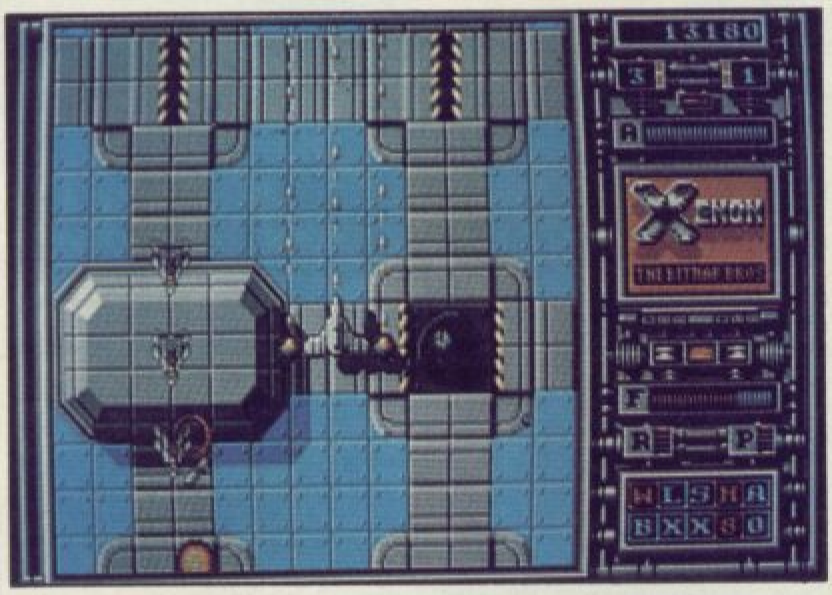
The second of Melbourne House's conversions of **Arcadia** coin-ops, *Xenon* is yet another game in the vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up mould. The Amiga technology in the boards of the Arcadia machines makes for quality conversions to the Amiga and other 68000 machines. Perfect (or near perfect) coin-op conversions are the result, with arcade quality graphics, sound and gameplay.

The time is the future and after five centuries of peace following the horrific Arachnid battles, war again breaks out. The aggressors, an alien race known as the Xenites, are ravaging the colonised systems of the Federation. Captain Xod of the Federation has run into a Xenite ambush and has been captured by the alien horde. The only person in range is ace pilot Darrian, and when it comes down to it, that means you!

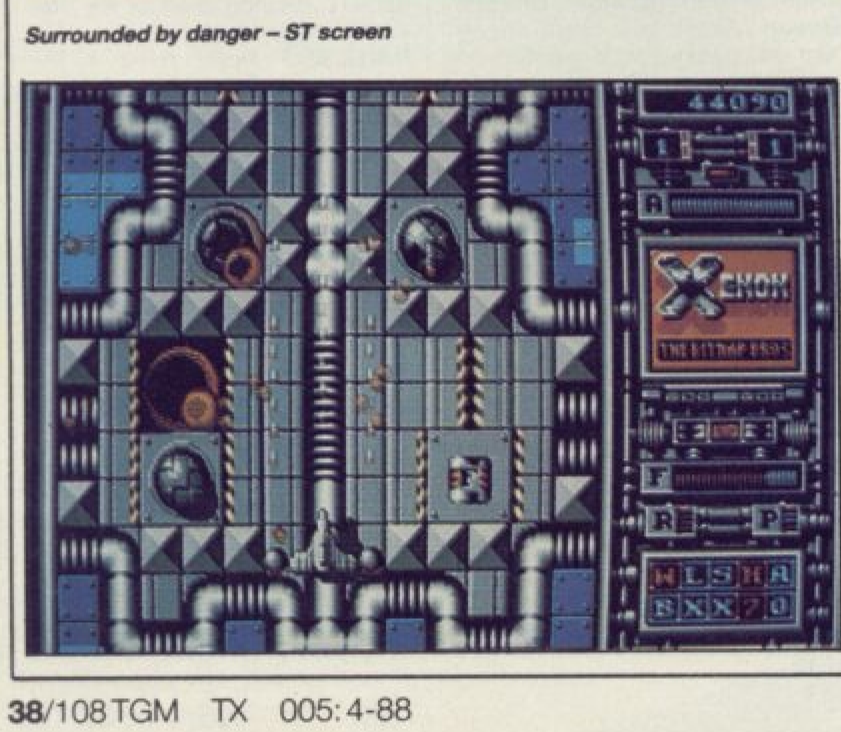
The rescue mission would be no problem were it not for the fact that the Captain is stranded deep in enemy territory; 16 sectors away to be precise, with each zone crammed full of warring Xenites. The foul aliens come in all shapes and sizes, from small, dumb, ground-roaming ladybird Xenite guards to large, very fast, highly armoured, laser-firing, mother Xenite spaceships, all intent on stopping Darrian dead! Any hits taken are absorbed by the shields, with a life lost if the ship is hit with its shields at zero strength.



As you can see, there is nothing to choose between the graphics – this is an Amiga screen



Arcade quality graphics on your Amiga or ST – in this case the ST version – as the craft goes into flying mode



Surrounded by danger – ST screen

TRANSMOGRIFYING

To combat both the flying and ground roaming Xenites, Darrian's ship can transform into a ground tank and back at will, though choosing the wrong craft in later zones can prove fatal. To give Darrian a better fighting chance, power pills may be collected, adding extra features to the currently selected craft. Power pills include various weapons, from lasers to homing missiles armour, smart bombs and balls which performing the same functions as the multiples in *Nemesis*.

At the halfway point and at the end of each sector a sentinel Xenite makes an appearance. As is usual in this type of game, the mother aliens require several hits in a single vulnerable place before exploding. Destroy the end-of-level alien and it is on to the next sector with faster, deadlier, more heavily armoured, laser-firing Xenites.

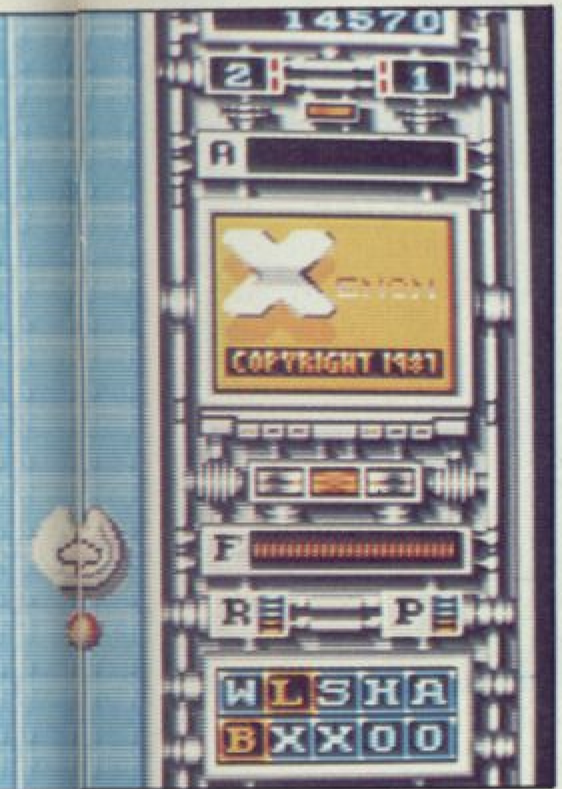
Xenon will almost certainly be a hit, with its arcade-perfect graphics, great gameplay and quality presentation. With its release, the demands for arcade-quality conversions will be even greater, so *Rockford* and other Amiga board conversions should be worth waiting for. Melbourne House are a company to watch for in '88 if they continue to release games of this calibre.

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

The boast of 'arcade-quality graphics', so often heard when conversions of coin-ops are made, has now come true with Xenon. **Incredibly, NOTHING has been lost in the conversion to the Amiga. Coin-op players will be hard pushed to find differences between this and the original. It's such a shame that the game is so difficult; the frustratingly hard first sector doesn't encourage further play and only the most persistent player would want to keep at it. The second sector is even worse, and with the game's self-adjusting difficulty feature the later sectors are virtually impossible. As a result, this makes the game extremely frustrating to play at first. The different weapons to collect and the graphically varying levels give** Xenon **more depth than** Insanity Fight **and other shoot-'em-ups in a similar vein. One of the best action games on the Amiga to date, setting new standards in coin-op conversions.**

OVERALL 88%

FECT



ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

Amiga owners may not be too pleased to hear that the ST version is graphically identical but the ST has coped admirably. The only difference being in the game's background music, it's rather weak in places and stops altogether when firing bullets. Despite the inevitable sound problems, the coin-op's graphic quality and addictive gameplay have all been captured with amazing accuracy. What knocks Xenon **down is its inherent difficulty. A slight alteration of the difficulty level could have provided the player with a decent challenge, but as it stands it's a little too tough for novices. Players of the original won't be disappointed with the conversion as all the tactics used in the coin-op game can be applied to the computer version exactly.** Xenon **is the most challenging ST shoot-'em-up so far.**

OVERALL 85%

"Coin-op players will be hard pushed to find any differences between this and the original . ."

MASTERS AND SLAVES

MIDI MAZE

Hybrid Arts

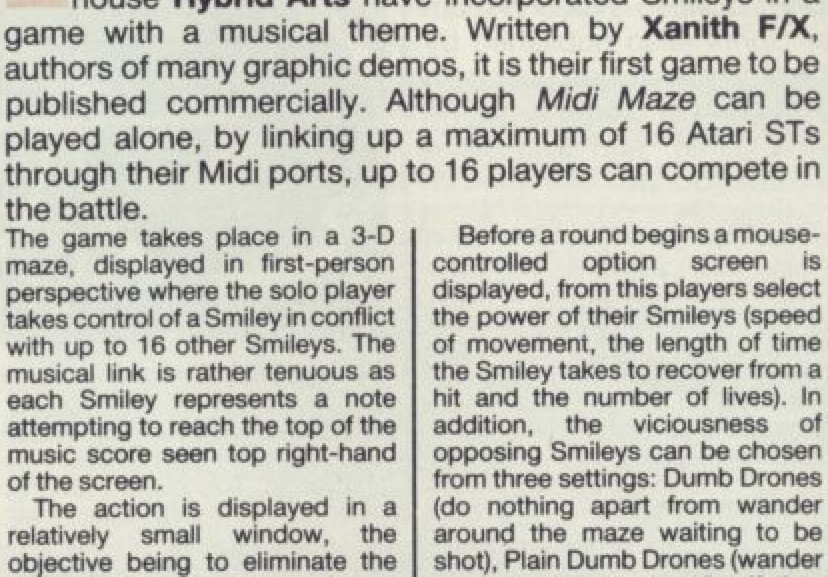
In the 1970s the in-thing was to wear a Smiley Face badge encouraging all and sundry to 'have a nice day' – quite sickening really. Now American software house **Hybrid Arts** have incorporated Smileys in a game with a musical theme. Written by **Xanith F/X**, authors of many graphic demos, it is their first game to be published commercially. Although *Midi Maze* can be played alone, by linking up a maximum of 16 Atari STs through their Midi ports, up to 16 players can compete in the battle.

The game takes place in a 3-D maze, displayed in first-person perspective where the solo player takes control of a Smiley in conflict with up to 16 other Smileys. The musical link is rather tenuous as each Smiley represents a note attempting to reach the top of the music score seen top right-hand of the screen.

The action is displayed in a relatively small window, the objective being to eliminate the other Smileys by lining each up in your sights and scoring three direct hits. When ten Smileys have been busted the round ends. Thus *Midi Maze* is an incredibly simple game, but the addition of masses of options give its playability factor seemingly endless possibilities . . .

Before a round begins a mouse-controlled option screen is displayed, from this players select the power of their Smileys (speed of movement, the length of time the Smiley takes to recover from a hit and the number of lives). In addition, the viciousness of opposing Smileys can be chosen from three settings: Dumb Drones (do nothing apart from wander around the maze waiting to be shot), Plain Dumb Drones (wander around the maze but fire if they come in contact with you), and Not So Dumb Drones who actively seek you out in an attempt to destroy you.

Midi Maze is an amusing game for one player, but with a couple of STs linked together it becomes more challenging.



Go to the top of the stave: Loony Tunes with Smileys – ST screen



MIDI MAD!

Using the ST Midi connection, up to 16 machines can be linked together, enabling players to be in direct control of a Smiley each, but you do need a Midi-cable for each ST. By forming a Midi-Ring using the Mid-In and Out ports, one machine becomes the master while the others remain slaves. The master machine player is the only one who can employ the options – the slaves do nothing more than play the game.

Another facility the Midi connection offers is that of Midi-CAM. Midi-CAM allows an ST, which is not actually being used to play the game, to provide a view of the action to an audience. Using this the audience can either watch the action from an overhead point of view, or switch between individual players' displays.

Obviously, *Midi Maze* is much more enjoyable played this way as long as you have Midi-cables (costing around £4.50 each), but whether these options make the very high £35 price tag worthwhile for individual players is a matter open to question.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £34.95

Considering its musical title it's surprising that there is a lack of music and decent sound FX. All you get is bells and whistles produced from firing and being hit – a jaunty sound track would have created much more enthusiasm for the gameplay. Midi Maze**, though simple, is implemented well, with very smooth animation of maze walls Smileys who move in and out of perspective convincingly. However, unless played in conjunction with other people, the game quickly loses its attraction, and its price for the single user is certainly a detraction.**

OVERALL 62%

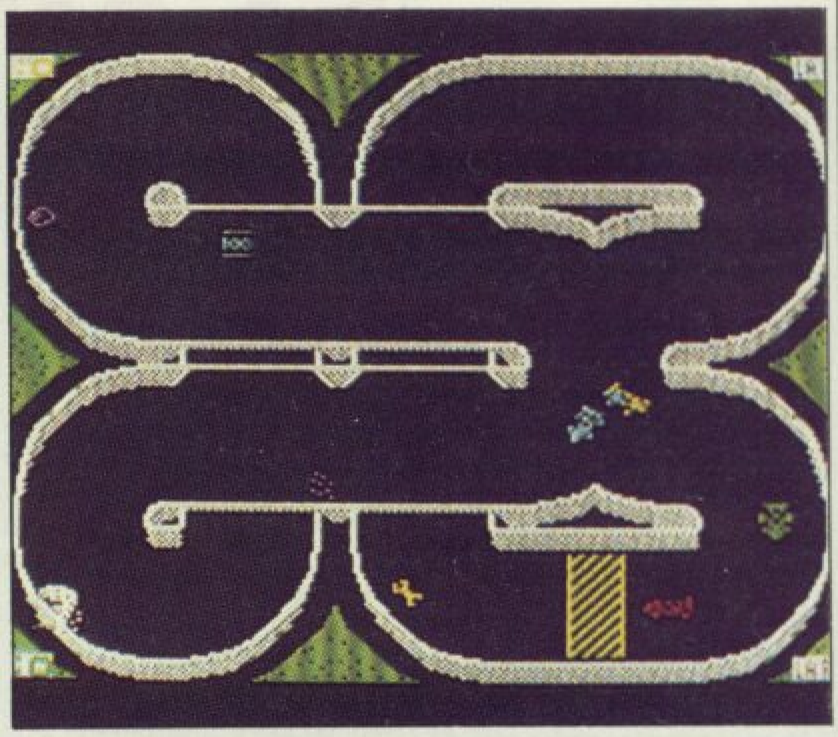
" . . . an amusing game for one player, with a couple of STs linked together it becomes more challenging."

SPANNER IN THE WORKS

CHAMPIONSHIP SPRINT

Electric Dreams

Licensed from the Atari coin-op, *Championship Sprint* – for those of you who can still stand the pace after the recent plethora of *Sprint* clones – has one main advantage of over *Super Sprint* (also published by Electric Dreams) and that is the ability to design your own courses using the track editor. **Catalyst Coders** are the programming force behind the game, and they have improved it considerably over *Super Sprint*.



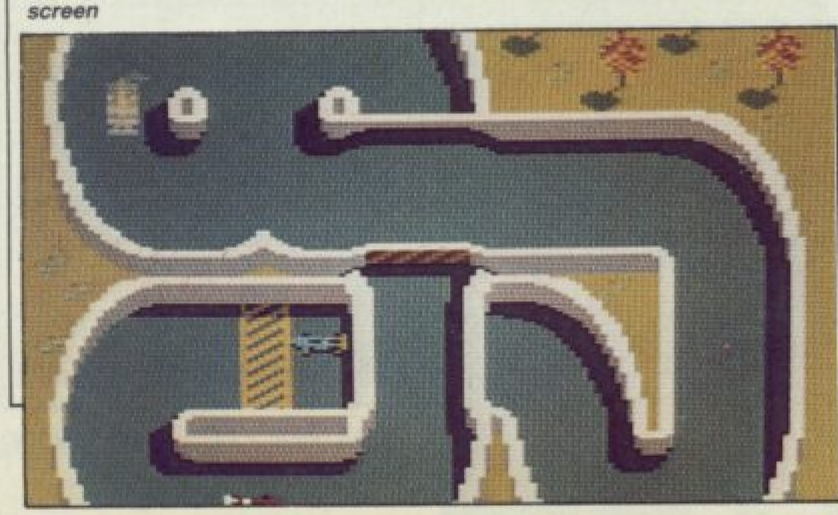
Better graphics and improved playability on the Spectrum version

The game of Championship Sprint is just as you would expect; eight different tracks to race around, each with whirlwinds, gravel, oil and water hazards. The objective is simply to race four circuits against three other cars on each of the eight tracks and emerge the winner. Collecting the occasionally appearing spanners may later improve the car's performance, giving it either super turbo, turbo acceleration, a score increase or higher top speed. It is advisable to use a joystick because the car is less easily controlled via keys.

Losing a race means the end of that particular game, but should first place be achieved you go onto compete in the next race, and sc on until all eight tracks are completed. Two players can also race simultaneously against two computer controlled cars.



For once the cars actually look like cars rather than blobs of colour – Amstrad screen



SCALE TRICKS

Championship Sprint's attraction is the track editor which allows you to create and race on your own courses designed from 30 different pieces of track. It is like building a Scalextric track – the piece of track desired (whether it be a ramp, a straight, a corner or whatever) is selected and the cursor moved to the location where you want it to be placed; press fire to position.

Along the top of the screen are pull down menus (these appear as icons along the right-hand side on the Spectrum), split into four groups, which activate more options – hazards, ability, screens and options. Through hazards you can decide whether you want whirlwinds, gravel, water or oil, and in what quantity on the track. Ability has two sub-options: Spanners, lets you put up to seven spanners on the track, and Drone Speed determines how fast the opposition travels, ranging from zero (slowest) up to five (fastest).

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Championship Sprint **is probably the best of the genre that has been plaguing our screens in recent months. For once the cars actually look like cars rather than blobs of colour. The playability has been increased, leaving none of the frustration which spoilt** Super Sprint**. Through its implementation, the track editor is far easier to use on the Amstrad than other versions. So** Championship Sprint **is a commendable rendition on the Amstrad and should be popular with its arcade followers.**

OVERALL 72%

Screens accesses three sub-options: Next shows you the next track, Clear erases the track on the current screen and Set Course lets you input the direction the cars race around the track. The final choice is in the Options menu; from this you can save or load tracks, set the playing keys or see all 30 different track segments.

Without the track editor *Championship Sprint* would rate as merely a good rendition of the *Sprint* theme, but with its inclusion, the package proves an interesting addition to the range.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £9.99

The Spectrum version, too, improves over its predecessor with better graphics and far more playability. There's a good feeling of being in control of the car, which itself is more manoeuvrable and eradicates problems of getting stuck in corners. The track editor is time consuming to use because there's no track selection menu – each piece has to be selected in the main area by scrolling segments of track already in place until the desired piece is found. However, once this system has been mastered it poses no real difficulties, and it scores as well as the Amstrad because track action is faster and more compulsive.

OVERALL 72%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Like the Spectrum, the Commodore incarnation of Championship Sprint **plays well but the editor is fiddly to use. One definite advantage over the others, though, is the ability to play the game straight from the track editor rather than saving out a track and then having to load it back into the main game program, which makes the whole process quicker. Despite the ageing theme** Championship Sprint **is the best of the current selection.**

OVERALL 70%

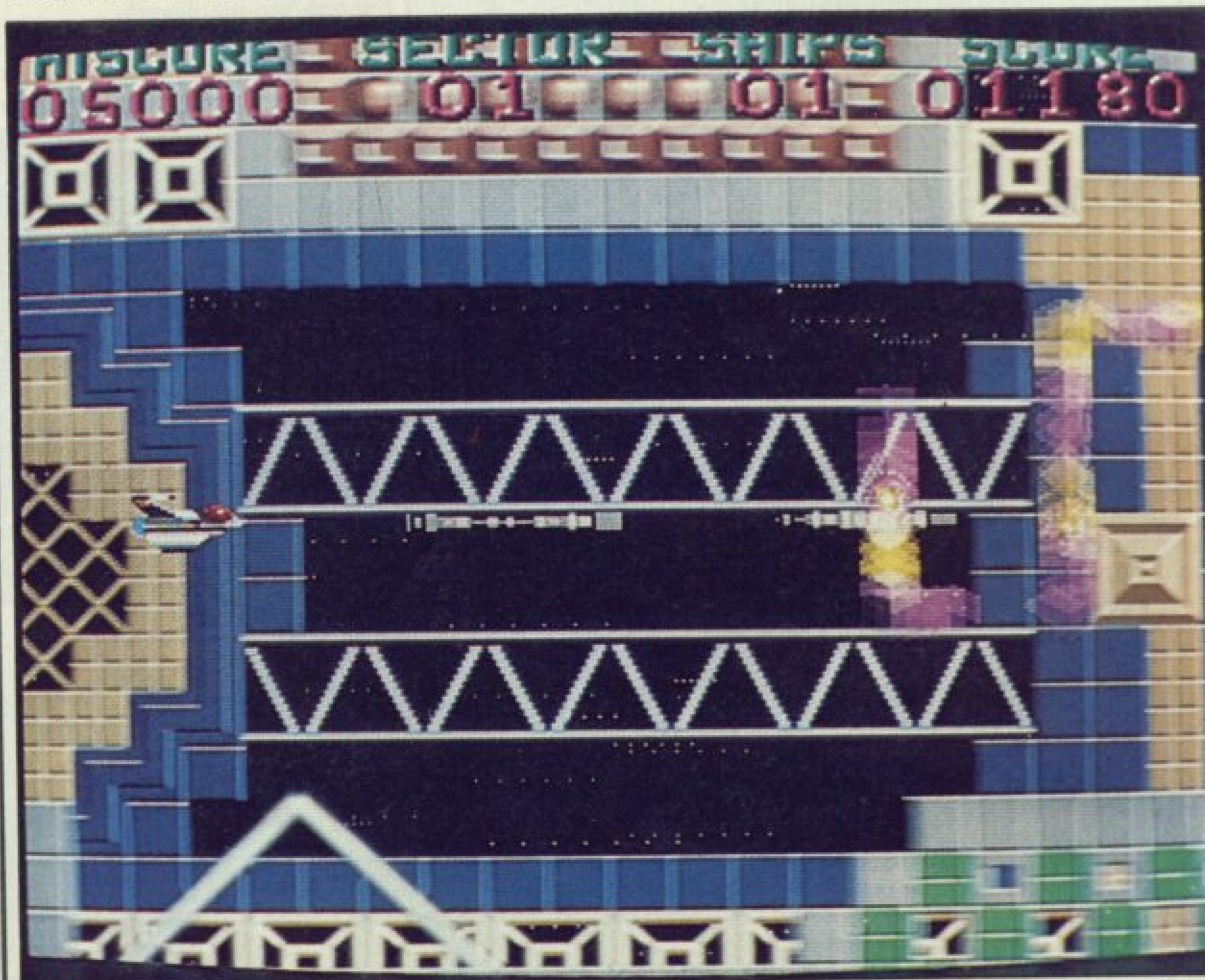
"Championship Sprint **proves an interesting addition to the range."**

FAST 'N FURIOUS

XR 35 FIGHTER MISSION

Anco

Anco are rapidly asserting themselves as major producers of budget-priced software for the ST and Amiga although not without failures such as the disappointing *Karting Grand Prix* (receiving 40% in Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE). *XR 35 Fighter Mission* is a standard horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up, but one that sports some very impressive graphics and fast, difficult, non-stop action.



One of twelve hazard-filled sectors of basic shoot-'em-up action on the Amiga

Anco score no points for originality and no points either for the scenario behind the game because there isn't one. All you do is fly the XR 35 space ship through twelve sectors filled with all types of hazards: fireball-spitting spheres, rotating cubes, snakes made up of revolving balls, alien ships moving in formations at ferocious speeds and mother ships lie in wait. The enemy all follow set patterns, so remembering their movements is the key to success.

The whole screen is used, with the playing area set in between walls and rock faces at the top and bottom of the screen, contact with which is, naturally enough, fatal. As the space ship progresses through each sector, aliens fly around in increasingly complex formations, rapidly launching their entire arsenals at your craft. Towards the end of each sector, the mother ships, which provide an even harder time, should be destroyed to move onto the next sector.

Even though *XR 35* makes no attempt to be original, it gets good marks for showing that there's still life in the old shoot-'em-up. It may seem like redressing an old idea, but when the results are this good who cares?

AMIGA

Diskette: £9.95

What makes XR 35 Fighter Mission **special is the highly professional presentation of the game. Everything from the alien graphics, and the multi-layer scrolling right through to the smallest explosions have been designed and implemented with considerable thought and attention to detail. The appeal lies in its simplistic gameplay, although each sector is a highly demanding challenge in itself, requiring a good memory (to remember each attack pattern), a sturdy joystick and an awful lot of skill (or luck) to succeed. The spaceships are so fast there is very little margin for error, which can make it a bit frustrating at first. Nothing new then, but a gem of a game nonetheless, and with its quality presentation, highly recommended.**

OVERALL 76%

" . . . an old idea, but when the results are this good who cares?"

CAPPIN HAND

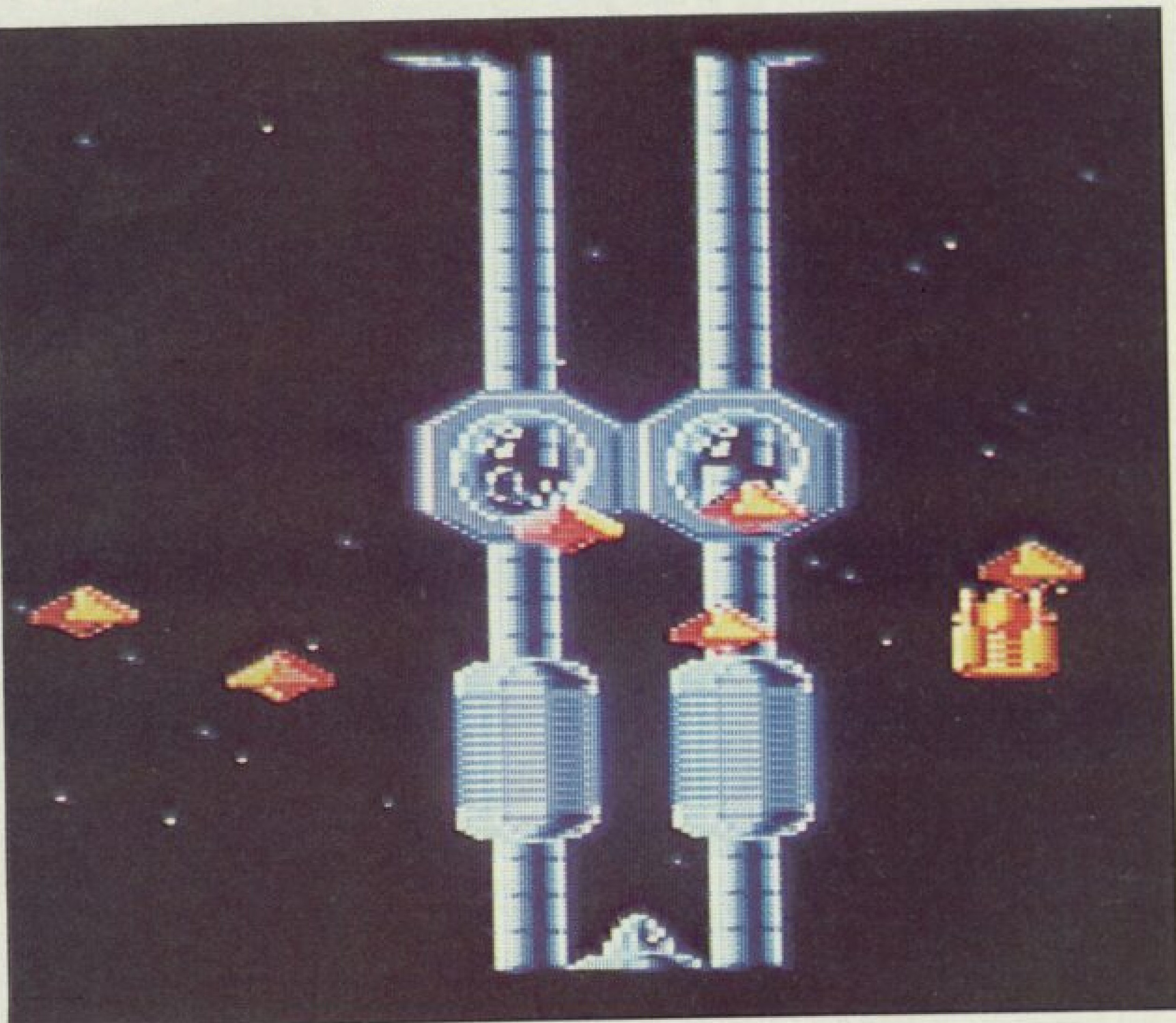
TASK III
Databyte

A team of German programmers, **Peter Hemmer**, **Volker Roth** and **Frank Endler**, has recently been snapped up by Databyte and commissioned to write a number of games for release in this country during 1988. *Task III* is their very first step into the games market and if the standard of software at least remains consistent they should soon become the proverbial household names.

COMMODORE 64
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Just when you thought you had had enough of the shoot-'em-up genre, here comes one to thoroughly revitalise interest. Task III **is a highly proficient blasting game, consisting of all those necessary ingredients required by the scroll-vertically-and-pummel-anything-that-moves fans; speed, addiction, smooth action, great sound FX/music and plenty to go for.** Task III **is initially very frustrating due to its toughness but perseverance is rewarded, and progress, although difficult, is both achievable and satisfying.** Task III **is a game only to be tackled by hardened shoot-'em-up players.**

OVERALL 84%



Ten years after the Cappin wars, an evil emperor has selfishly invaded the once peaceful galaxy of Cybernetica. You, Prince Troma, son of Colon (does that make you a semi-colon?), as the last survivor of the Cappin wars rebel star fleet, must seek out and destroy this malefic conqueror.

Task III is a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up. It consists of 16 levels of mayhem in which you attempt to survive long enough to blast any and all enemy ships, avoid traps and natural hazards and pick up those necessary extra weapons.

The weapons available are depicted as square platforms, close to which fly support balloons. Each time a balloon is shot the weapon available (indicated by a pattern on the platform) changes. The choice usually begins with Speed and flips through Front-lasers, Smart-bombs and Dimension Warps until it reaches the Emergency Package, which gives your ship all the weapons it can carry . . . for a limited time period. Staying close to a platform for too long soon becomes hazardous, as the deadly balloons attack with ever greater ferocity. Implementing the weapon selected is achieved simply by flying over the platform.



KAMIKAZE CAPERS

One or two players may indulge in *Task III* and control of the ships is via joystick. Should your courage run out there is a quit game option and a pause function to allow for breathing now and again. There is also a small score awarded if you decide to commit suicide – this is done by colliding with a backdrop without shooting your weapons. High scores are saved to disk for posterity.

OTHER FORMATS

Looks like this one is for the Commodore 64 only, and there are no plans for conversions.

" . . . Task III is a highly proficient blasting game . . . "

TOP RAY GUN

GLOBAL DEFENSE
Sega

How many coin-ops are left for Sega to convert onto console? Now the arcade machine *S.D.I* has undertaken the conversion and changed its name in the process. *Global Defense* is based on Ronald Reagan's concept of space-based defensive weapons destroying incoming enemy nuclear missiles. A subject not without controversy, but nevertheless a fitting subject for an arcade game.

The time is the future, the Earth is protected by orbiting stations, and someone has pushed the button. Nuclear missiles have been launched and it is now do-or-die time. *Global Defense* is split into two stages, the offensive and defensive half. Starting on the offence, the screen scrolls from right to left as your battle satellite roams through space. Enemy nuclear missiles enter stage right on the first screen and, unless destroyed, carry on to re-enter the atmosphere and fry your country's cities. A indicator along the bottom of the screen shows the damage caused by warheads getting through; if the indicator fills up completely, it's goodbye America.

Apart from the missiles themselves, the opposition takes the form of kamikaze killer satellites, space fighters zooming around in various formations and enemy battle bases hovering in space firing laser bolts at your lone craft. The missiles pass through the player without causing damage, but contact with anything else is fatal. Help is provided in the form of allied satellites which, when collected, offer up extras such as a faster-moving gunsight, faster rate of fire and a futuristic first-aid kit which neutralises any damage caused by the nukes.

Make it through the offensive half and a shuttle comes into view to retrieve your satellite, whereupon points are allocated based on the percentage of missiles, aliens, bases and fighters destroyed (with bonus points awarded for achieving 100% destruction). After this, it's on to the defensive stage where the Motherland lies thousands of miles below and the enemy missiles are coming over the horizon. The warheads start as dots and grow larger with their heat shields glowing as they re-enter the atmosphere. Destroy them before they hit their targets and, as their flight time is only a matter of seconds, each shot must count. Not the easiest of tasks when they fly over *en masse*, and on later levels it is even worse as they split up into smaller, just as lethal, re-entry vehicles.

Survive this, and once again points are awarded based on the total percentage of hits (including a defence rating based on the number of warheads which got through) before the next offensive half begins. As the player progresses through the later levels, the missiles change their flight patterns (changing between horizontal and vertical flight), the enemy fighters become more aggressive, more missiles appear in the defensive half and the backdrops get even more impressive graphically.

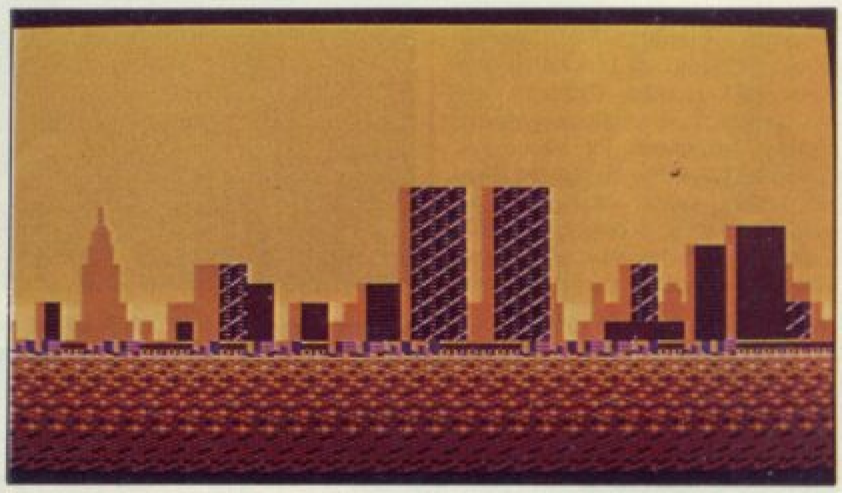
Like the coin-op, the console game uses two fire buttons to control the satellite. One button to fire deflection shots at targets and move the gunsight (as in *Missile Command*) and the other to move the satellite around the screen. What makes it tricky is that both actions can't be performed at the same time. Unlike the coin-op, only one player is allowed on the screen at any one time, an omission that plagued *Alien Syndrome* (see Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE). As a result, without the dual player facility the console version is slightly tougher than the coin-op, but the appeal and playability of the original is still there.

SEGA

Mega Cartridge: £19.95

On a single One Mega Cartridge, Global Defense **manages to put big name coin-op conversions like** Afterburner **on Two Mega cartridges to shame. A very close version indeed with some wonderful backdrops (getting even better on the later levels) which really show what the Sega is capable of when the programmers put their minds to it. Much of the coin-op's playability has been captured and each level is faithfully recreated both graphically and in general gameplay. Where the game loses out is in the sound (which is nothing special) and the lack of twin-player action. It's mystifying that Sega should have problems with converting dual player games. This aside,** Global Defense **is a great game, one of the closest coin-op conversions yet, and hopefully the forerunner of even better console games.**

OVERALL 81%



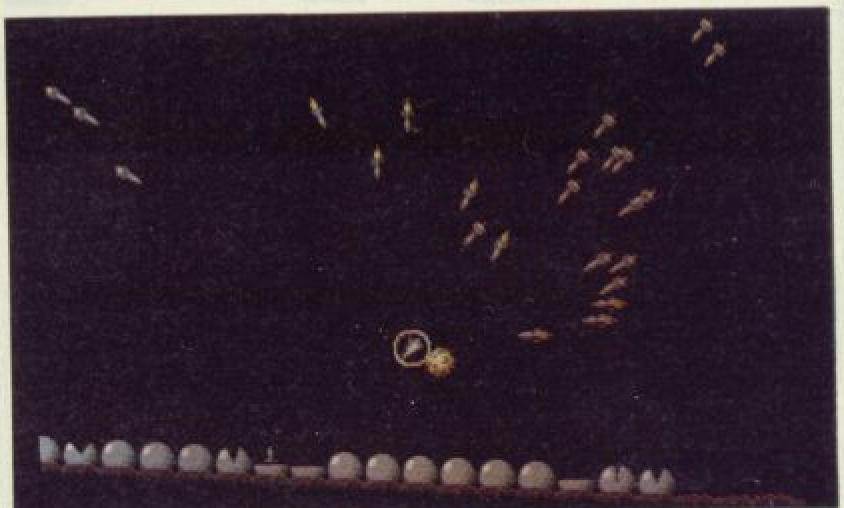
The very effective city destruction screen

Coin-op conversion from S.D.I. *in the arcades,* Global Defense *pits the tiny satellite (centre under the big rock) against asteroids, missiles and enemy craft*



"Much of the coin-op's playability has been captured . . ."

THRUSTOID



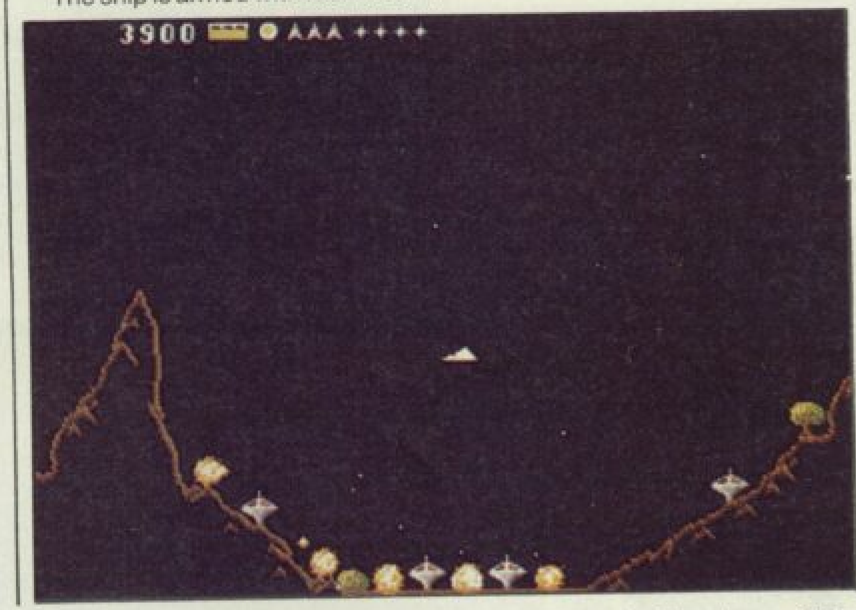
OIDS
FTL Games/Mirrorsoft

No, it is not Faster Than Light, the offshoot of Gargoyle Games, who have created *Oids*, but **FTL Games** from San Diego in sunny California. Two other games from them include the *Elite*-style game *SunDog*, and more recently *Dungeon Master*, which, as it happens, is also reviewed in this issue.

The Oids of the title are an oppressed race of android slaves controlled by the tyrannical Biocretes. Starved of oil, forced to work to the point of collapse and then melted alive to make new androids, the life of an Oid is not a happy one. Their saviour comes in the shape of a V-Wing pilot from a sympathetic alien race determined to end their slavery.

One of five Biocrete galaxies is selected to commence the rescue mission, whereupon a mothership takes the V-Wing to the first planet of the chosen destination. The Biocrete planets are barren worlds, devoid of life bar a few trees and bushes. Chasms and caverns provide a natural defence against attackers (or rescuers), but to be sure, the Biocretes have set up gun and missile emplacements, large ground bases launching jets and flying saucers, explosive orbs and devices which use artificial gravity to pull and push your V-Wing around the sky.

The ship is armed with four Nova bombs and an unlimited supply of nuclear bullets capable of destroying most defences, although for the larger ground bases a Nova bomb or two is recommended. Its force shield provides last ditch protection against enemy bullets, missiles, collisions with the planet surface and kamikaze craft. But of course it gradually wears down unless recharged by using up fuel. Fuel bases around each planet provide top ups if the ship lands nearby, and teleporters can be entered to reach normally inaccessible areas totally sealed in by the rockface.



RESCUE LANDER

Firing a nuclear bullet at the Biocrete factories, inside which the Oids are trapped, releases the

As you can see from the attractive travel between planets screen, the Biocrete worlds are barren looking places – ST screen

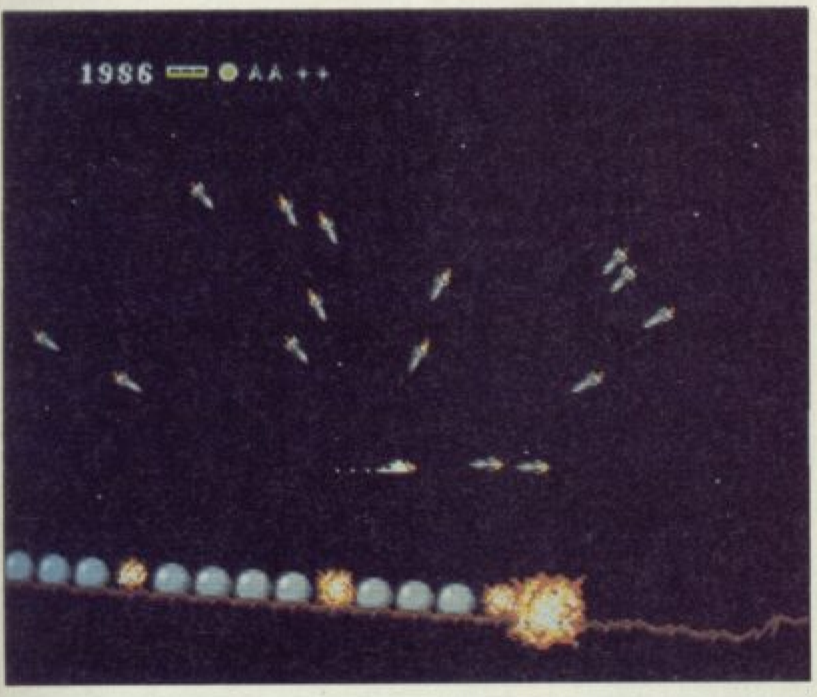


prisoners and they run around, waving frantically to attract attention in an attempt to be rescued. This requires you to land on a nearby plateau and then the minute figures run over and enter the ship. Oids are not indestructible and perish in flames if shot at; likewise, activating the ship's exhaust or shields burns the little automatons to a crisp if they approach too near. And, naturally enough, if you crash the V-Wing, any Oids on board are also lost.

Rescue sufficient numbers of Oids and the mother ship re-enters the atmosphere. Thrust up to it to unload the Oids and move onto the next planet in the chosen galaxy. If the final planet is cleared, the mother ship heads back to base where the eternally grateful Oids are dropped off and the mission ends. Four other galaxies of planets can be explored and if *that* isn't enough, a construction kit is supplied with the game. Using the kit, existing planets can be radically altered or entirely new ones created and populated to suit the designer's whims and fancies.

Oids is really a *Thrust* derivative – only far superior with its highly detailed graphics, subtle use of colours and fiendishly addictive gameplay. And the notion of landing a craft whilst avoiding planetary hazards in order to pick up waving rescuees, goes back to the earliest days of Spectrum gaming . . . but *Oids*'s gameplay is far more sophisticated. Ship control is simplicity itself and yet highly demanding, while surviving can can get very difficult on later levels, with inertia and gravity devices pushing the ship all around the screen, hordes of missiles to contend with and sheer rockfaces to run into.

For the smallest graphics ever, take a look at Oids



ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.99

For the smallest graphics ever, take a look at Oids. The little robots running around are wonderfully animated, and they're all the more impressive when you realise they are all of two pixels in height on the screen. There's something disturbingly satisfying about shooting helpless Oids, the animation when they burst into flames is incredible. Even with five galaxies of planets to explore, they can only provide so much lasting appeal, which is why FTL Games have included the easy to use and highly flexible construction kit. Oids is a great game, so take a look at it (if only to see the sickeningly amazing animated effect of Oids going up in smoke).

OVERALL 82%

OTHER FORMATS

The next logical step would be an Amiga version, and the game's simplicity and basic idea means 8-bit conversions would be entirely feasible. However, there are no plans to do so yet.

" . . . highly detailed graphics, subtle use of colours and fiendishly addictive gamep-lay."

NORTHSIDE STORY

THE KING OF CHICAGO
Mirrorsoft/Cinemaware

Cinemaware now have a healthy collection of releases for the Amiga, numbering amongst them *Defender Of The Crown* and *Sinbad*. Indeed our cover this issue is dedicated to two more forthcoming releases previewed on page 15. *The King Of Chicago* continues their homage to movie classics, focusing on the legends of the Thirties gangster era. To animate the computer characters and give them a semblance of emotion **Doug Sharp**'s Dramaton system was used; but, as usual, the finished product is a collective effort from the Cinemaware team.



There will now be a disk intermission: one of the beautifully drawn backdrops – Amiga screen

Scarface Al Capone has been removed for an extended vacation in Alcatraz, leaving his Southside gang in the hands of the devious and dangerous Tony Santucci. Pinky Callahan (your character) is a rising mug in the Northside organisation, sick of Chicago's bloody civil wars and second in line for the Northside leadership. Ahead of him are the discredited Old Man and his chief advisor, Ben; both of whom can be persuaded to stand down . . .

The action begins in 1931 and ends in 1934, the year leaders of organised crime held a meeting in New York to form the national Syndicate. This was set up to centralise violence and remove it from the hands of individual gangs; Chicago was considered too barbaric to join. Pinky thus has three years to establish such a commanding position in Chicago that gang wars are a thing of the past – and an invitation to the Syndicate will be duly forwarded.

The program takes the form of various 'scenes', generally divided by still shots containing a hint as to what is to come or what you have to do. More often than not, these contain a tinge of irony or black comedy: 'What are friends for but to step on as you head for the top'. The scenes themselves always involve Pinky and include one or more of the other characters to whom he can talk. For single disk drive users, this structure can prove annoying because of the constant disk access required.

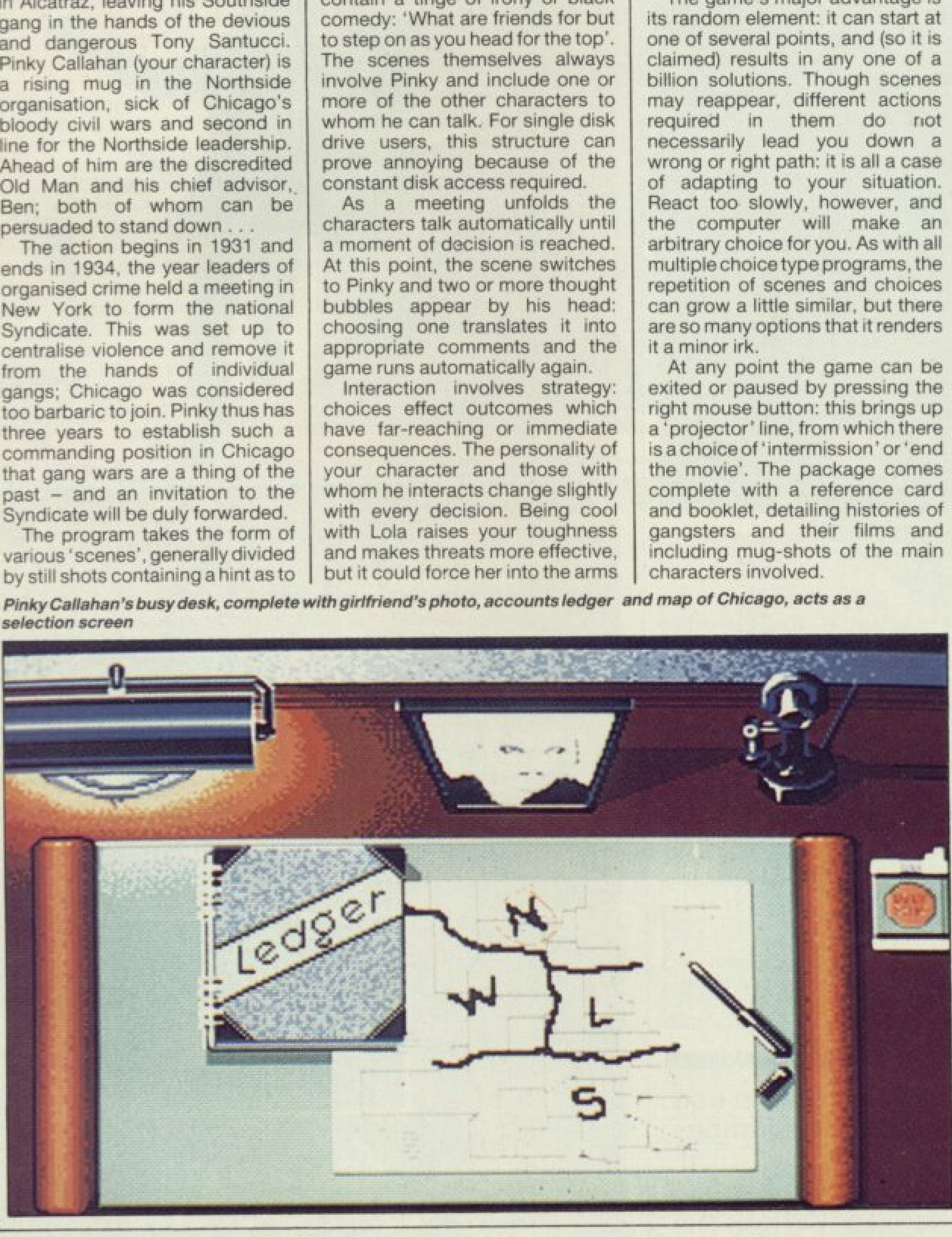
As a meeting unfolds the characters talk automatically until a moment of decision is reached. At this point, the scene switches to Pinky and two or more thought bubbles appear by his head: choosing one translates it into appropriate comments and the game runs automatically again.

Interaction involves strategy: choices effect outcomes which have far-reaching or immediate consequences. The personality of your character and those with whom he interacts change slightly with every decision. Being cool with Lola raises your toughness and makes threats more effective, but it could force her into the arms of your rival; indeed, a cool deviousness pays far greater rewards than cowardice or rash gun-toting does.

The game's major advantage is its random element: it can start at one of several points, and (so it is claimed) results in any one of a billion solutions. Though scenes may reappear, different actions required in them do not necessarily lead you down a wrong or right path: it is all a case of adapting to your situation. React too slowly, however, and the computer will make an arbitrary choice for you. As with all multiple choice type programs, the repetition of scenes and choices can grow a little similar, but there are so many options that it renders it a minor irk.

At any point the game can be exited or paused by pressing the right mouse button: this brings up a 'projector' line, from which there is a choice of 'intermission' or 'end the movie'. The package comes complete with a reference card and booklet, detailing histories of gangsters and their films and including mug-shots of the main characters involved.

Pinky Callahan's busy desk, complete with girlfriend's photo, accounts ledger and map of Chicago, acts as a selection screen



AMIGA
Diskette: £29.95

Graphically, The King Of Chicago **is excellent, combining gorgeously evocative still shots with detailed and appropriately grim characters. The only detraction is the contrast between the faces, which are all beautifully drawn, and the suits, which are always simple, giving the impression of cardboard cut-outs. The sound complements this general high standard to create a fully convincing Thirties feel and without exception the musical backing is superb. There is black humour throughout, which really appeals to the air of deviousness and suspicion which the game creates. The only serious gripe is the constant disk access: it does impinge significantly on the atmosphere if you only have one drive. If you have two then, despite the high price, the game's depth and playability make it highly recommended.**

OVERALL 80%

OTHER FORMATS

As with other Cinemaware games, expect to see The King Of Chicago **released on the Commodore 64 and Atari ST with some adjustment in the graphics on the 64 version. As with the Amiga, constant disk accessing may be irksome for single drive owners of these machines.**

" . . . black humour appeals to the air of deviousness which the game creates."

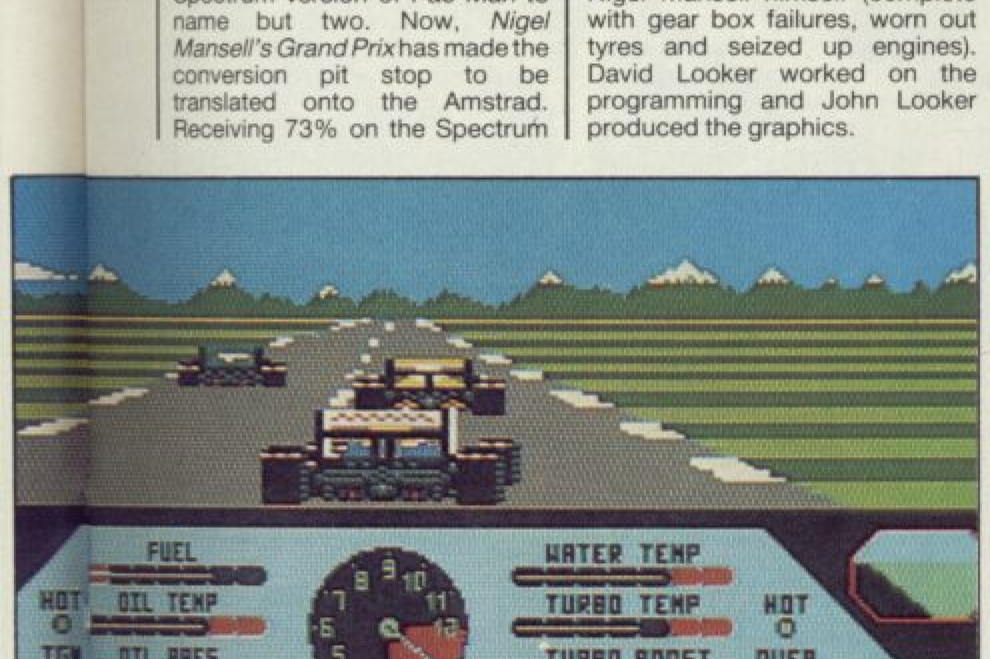
VERSION UPDATE

No-man'sell's land

NIGEL MANSELL'S GRAND PRIX
Martech

Amstrad Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

DJL SOFTWARE have been around for quite a few years, but early on decided to stop marketing their own product in favour of developing other people's. Very early programs included *Froggy* on the Spectrum (1983 under their own label) and the official Atarisoft Spectrum version of *Pac-Man* to name but two. Now, *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix* has made the conversion pit stop to be translated onto the Amstrad. Receiving 73% on the Spectrum in TGM004, the game uses the race elements of Formula One Grand Prix and adds strategy, with the player deciding when to make pit stops, when to apply the fuel consuming Turbo Boost and when to make the final winning burst past the leader, all in the style of Nigel Mansell himself (complete with gear box failures, worn out tyres and seized up engines). David Looker worked on the programming and John Looker produced the graphics.

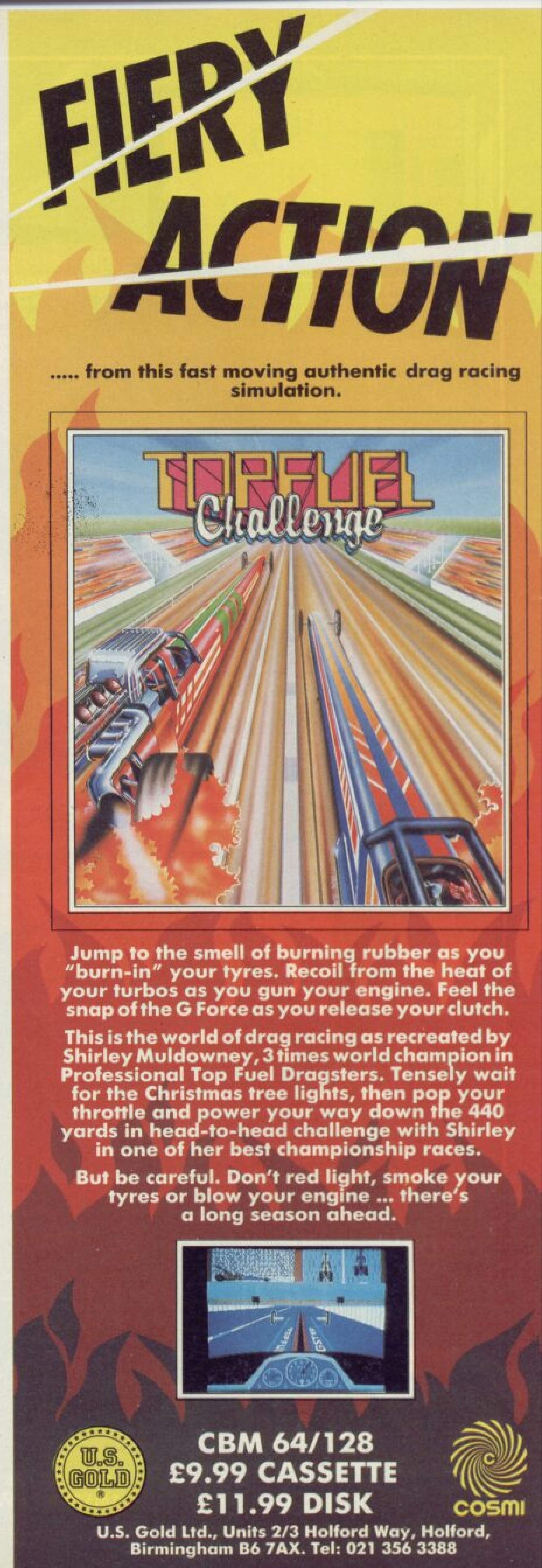


Not quite first yet – Nigel Mansell on the Amstrad

COMMENT

Apart from the improvement in graphics and colour there's very little extra to Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix on the Amstrad. The sensation of speed doesn't quite work and you only know you're doing 180mph by looking at the speedo in the cockpit. Like the Spectrum version, the cockpit is packed with too much information, and it can all get very tricky when you're trying to find the information you want on the display *and* keep the car on the track at the same time. In play, the game is highly enjoyable, racing around each of the 16 tracks in the Grand Prix season is good fun, and the inclusion of strategy lifts it above the ranks of the average road race game, though not enough, unfortunately, to capture the realism of a simulation. Consequently, it finds itself in a no-man's land in between the two groups.

AMSTRAD
OVERALL 74%





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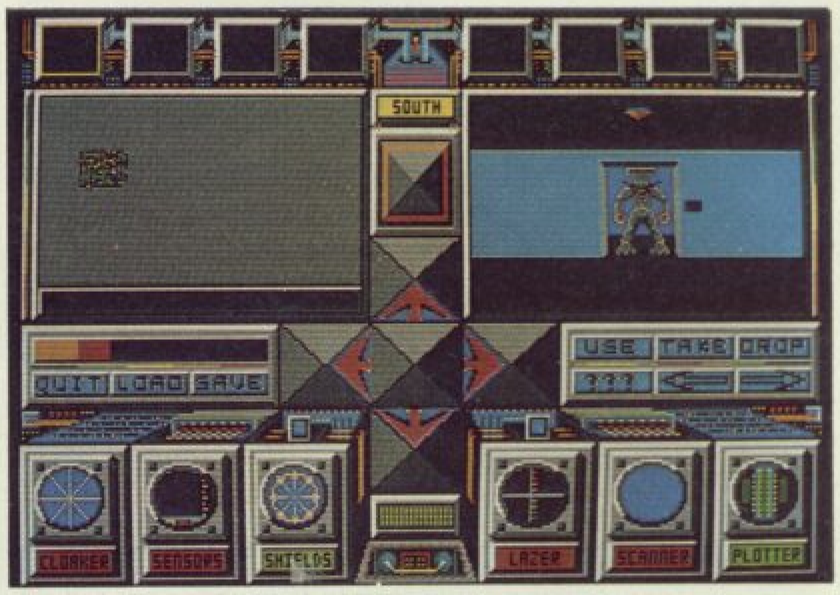
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WEAR A ROBOCAP

SLAYGON
Microdeal

S*laygon* was written using a utility called GFA Basic. The authors of the game, **John Conely** and **James Oxley**, defend their decision to use this low-level language by stating that: 'GFA Basic is easy to understand and simple to use . . . a language doesn't have to be confusing to be powerful, and GFA should enable you to do anything that your imagination can dream up . . . '. GFA Basic was created by **GFA Systemtechnik** and is distributed by **MichTron Inc**.



Aesthetically pleasing, the intricate and colourful layout of the screen makes you want to play Slaygon *– ST screens*

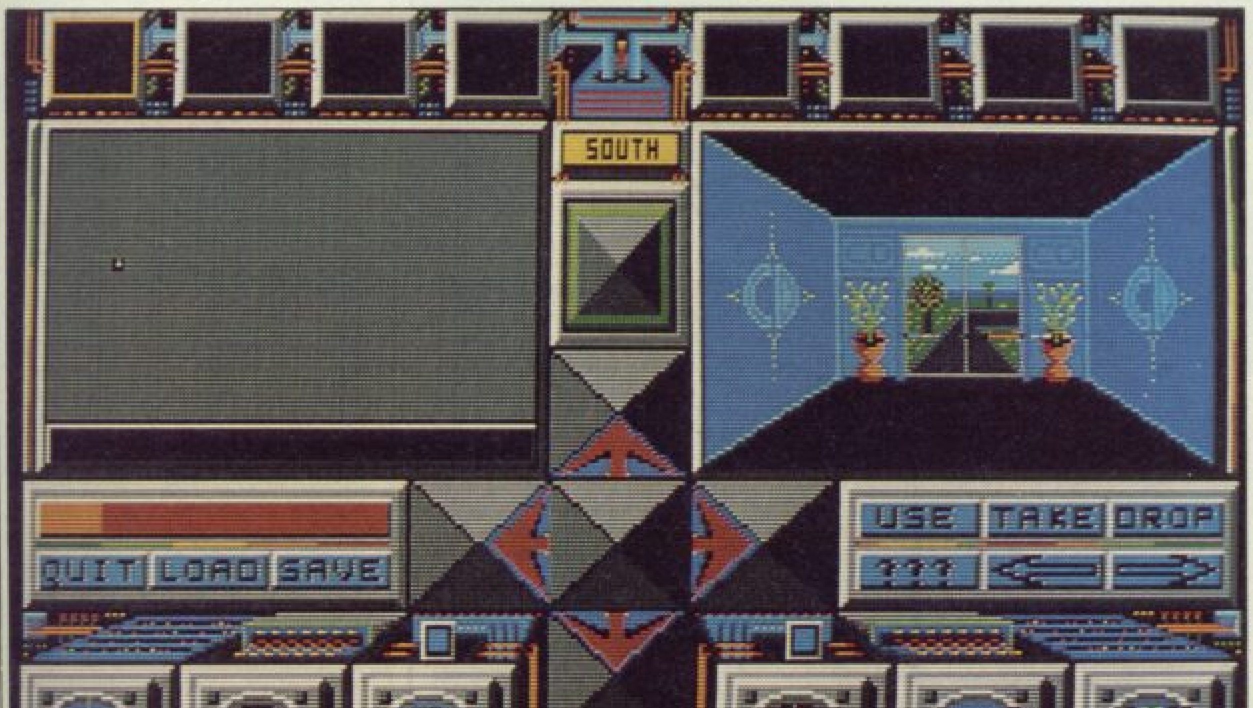
The Cybordynamics laboratory is working on a strain of toxic virus capable of annihilating all human life from the face of the planet. This sinister plan must be thwarted at any cost, and only you have the answer. Your creation, the Slaygon, is the most sophisticated military robot ever built and the ultimate infiltration device. As such, it is ideal for the task of entering the Cybordynamics lab and destroying the place.

Slaygon is controlled from within its frame by a highly trained specialist, and as it possesses the strength of a hundred men, the armoury and weapons of a small tank and the intelligence of its operator (?), it is purportedly unaffected by conventional weapons.

After acquiring a low-level security pass, you gain entry to the lab. It is now up to you to access the five security levels, explore the 500 rooms and ultimately destroy the Cybordynamics complex by finding five override codes to enter into the computer room's system console.

SYSTEMS CHECK

The screen display for *Slaygon* is very attractive, incorporating inventory boxes, energy level, systems status icons, directional arrows, an overhead map of the complex (which updates as you move around, pinpointing objects and places of importance) and a window depicting the front view from the machine. The Slaygon's in-built systems include laser gun, scanner, plotter (for mapping), directional indicator, shields, message display screen, cloaking device, battle sensors and storage areas. Most of these systems drain your energy in use, as do some of the objects picked up, although energy pods are dotted around the complex which restore lost power. Controlled by mouse, you choose the particular function required, move the cursor to it and click. Objects found along the way – such as keycards, power pods and extra weaponry – may be examined by the on-board computer, picked up and used as and when necessary.



ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

First impressions are aesthetically pleasing. The appealing screen layout is full of colour and easy to understand. Exploration of the Cybordynamics lab is interesting at first, there being a number of things to find, see and do. However, the urge to continue playing, until the eventual destruction of the lab, soon palls. The locations to visit and tasks to perform are very similar throughout Slaygon**, so tedium sets in quickly. Perhaps this is a game to play for a while, save your position and go back to it after a few weeks to have another go.**

OVERALL 54%

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

An Amiga version of Slaygon **should be available by the beginning of March. If there are any substantial differences to the Atari ST version (Microdeal don't think there will be) we shall review it, version update style, in a forthcoming issue.**

" . . . aesthetically pleasing, the urge to continue playing soon palls."

PRESS ANY KEY

METAL BIRD

FALCON
Spectrum Holobyte/Mirrorsoft)

The trans-Atlantic surge of American programs continues with the import of *Falcon* through Mirrorsoft, who also distribute CinemaWare and Mindscape products. *Falcon* is a simulator based on the USAF multi-role jet fighter, the General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon. The F-16 is a popular subject for simulations at the moment as Digital Integration also intend to release a game based around this remarkably agile, lightweight aircraft, and Electronic Arts are including it in their game *Interceptor* (see previews this issue).

GOOD ADVICE

Before any mission begins, the aircraft must be loaded up from the armament screen. At the lowest rank the F-16 has unlimited armament and fuel, but at higher ranks the weapons space on the jet is limited and weight/drag influences come into effect. Stores for the Falcon include free fall and runway denial bombs, air-to-surface Maverick missiles, Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles. ECM pods and extra fuel pods provide a passive but vital role and are essential stores for missions against long range, SAM-protected targets. The combination of arms loaded affects performance and the jet's ability to pull high Gs. The crew chief in charge of weapons loading warns of any unstable and potentially dangerous loads on the jet, so heed his advice!

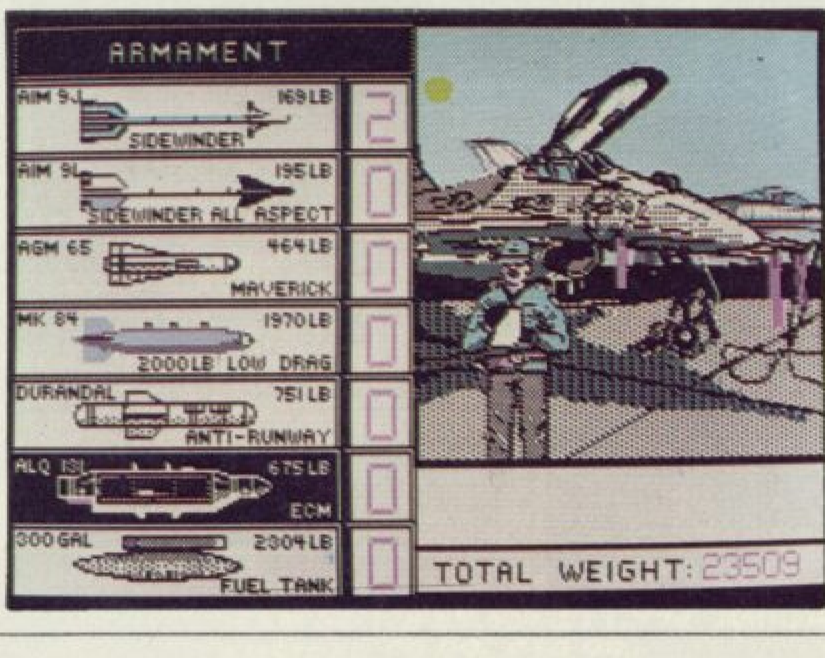
A comparatively clean cockpit layout distinguishes *Falcon* from previous simulations, with every dial and display serving a purpose. Rear and side views allow you to keep track of targets passing by, the rear view being most critical as it warns of enemy Migs and missiles sneaking up from behind. To keep track of damage there is a display on the right of the cockpit, while on the left are back-up displays for all of the aircraft's major instruments. There is even a 'black box' flight recorder, useful for replaying events after being blasted from the skies!

Once booted up, the standard options for selecting the control method and the sound level are displayed. A twin-player option allows for two PCs to be linked, flying one against the other in combat. Once registered on the duty roster, the pilot's rank can be chosen (from the lowest skill level of First Lieutenant through to the advanced level of Colonel), the number of enemy Migs to be encountered (up to three on screen at any one time) and any one of twelve missions. These range from a milk run – a practice bombing mission – to the grand slam mission with four Migs to intercept. The rank selected determines the skill level of the enemy Migs and the accuracy of missiles as well as the level of flight realism and the effects on the pilot and the F-16.

BIG MANUAL

Flying the plane is a demanding task and the PC copes admirably in reproducing the flight sensation above a world split into friendly and hostile territories, complete with bridges, SAM batteries, natural and man-made landmarks, runways, rivers and roads. As in reality, takeoffs and landings are as hazardous as actual combat, if you are unsure of the aircraft and its performance, although to help, there is an ILS (Instrument Landing System). The 132 page manual supplied with the game details everything about flying the Falcon from the first take off and basic flight manoeuvres through to combat procedures, the cockpit layout, advanced flight manoeuvres and what each of the twelve missions entails.

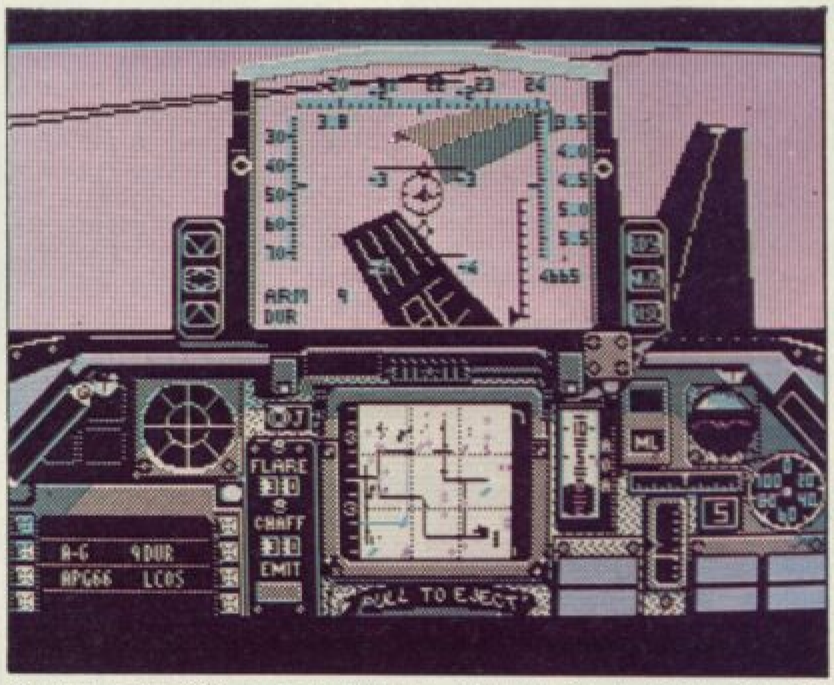
Combat is exciting, fast and enjoyable but limited, with only two types of enemy. While flight enthusiasts may find *Falcon* doesn't have the depth of *Chuck Yeager AFS*, it is a good game and well worth a look.



IBM PC
Diskette: £34.99

At last, a simulation with an authentic Head Up Display! In the past other simulators have simplified (and even at times, neglected totally) what is one of the most important displays in an aircraft, so it's great to see a HUD crammed with data. The manual is one of the best yet seen, detailing all aspects of the F-16 in a comprehensive and yet easy to understand manner. The less than appealing colours in the game are a reminder that it's running on a PC, which is a shame as it detracts from the game's considerable realism. Migs are daunting encounters (especially when they start firing back on higher levels) and the SAMS homing in at Mach three can get you sweating. Unfortunately, they're the only threats in the game (apart from the ground) and the challenge they offer can only be stretched so far.

OVERALL 79%



OTHER FORMATS

Falcon **is already on the Apple Macintosh at £34.99 and plans are afoot to bring out Amiga, ST, Commodore 64/128 versions and possibly Spectrum and Amstrad conversions too.**

"Combat is fast, exciting and enjoyable but limited . . . "

PILLOW THOUGHTS

FRIGHTMARE
Cascade Games

Programmer **Mike Mannion** and designer **Ron Ashley** – **Floppy Electronics Ltd** – were contracted to write *Frightmare* by Cascade Games. Mike has only written one game previously, *Top Duck* for Tynesoft Ltd, released Christmas 87. Mike informs us that the game was not dissimilar to the arcade platform-and-ladders romp, *Mr Do's Castle. Top Duck* failed to make the big time for Mike, appearing and disappearing with hardly the ruffle of a feather, it even managed to avoid THE GAMES MACHINE offices. However we wish them more success with *Frightmare* which between them, Mike and Ron hope to convert for other machines, the formats are listed below.

In the depths of the mind lurk the deepest horrors, images and sounds so awful that it is only when the subconscious rules your thoughts that they creep into existence . . . when you are asleep.

There are four dream zones to deal with, each more surreal than the last. The idea of *Frightmare* is to face them all within the allotted eight and a half hours between midnight and dawn. To succeed in the game one must survive the nightmares and increase your dream rating from the fairly passive Bad Dream to to the ultimate Nefarious Frightmare by destroying as many monsters as possible. This world of unreality is built on legends; the hands of thieving peasants cut off by an evil Prince roam the land, together with men who worshipped the moon in the hope of gaining eternal life and were subsequently condemned to walk the twilight world caught between the personae of wolf and man. There are those who made a pact with the Devil and now suffer the non-life of zombies, and a mad pharaoh stalks the land killing to experience the death denied him by his embalmers. In all there are 15 different monsters which can be tackled with various weapons found scattered throughout the dream world.

These armaments include; holy water, crucifixes, revolver-and-bullets (silver or mundane) and a watch to temporarily slow down monsters. Other aids are wings for increased jumping ability, rings for additional lives, transporters for moving to other screens and chalices which increase the dream rating. Control of the main character is via joystick.

The layout of the screen is tidy, showing the dreamer nimbly leaping about ancient buildings, monuments, trees and swamps avoiding or killing monsters like there was no tomorrow, which there won't be if you don't wake up!.



COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Platforms-and-ladders games are ten-a-penny, and are among the oldest formats for computer games. To be anything special a game of this ilk needs to stand head and shoulders above anything that has gone before. Frightmare **doesn't quite get there but is very close. The opening tune is suitably atmospheric, as are the sound FX during gameplay. Character control is finely tuned, and animation of all the characters is'effective. Colourful backdrops add ambience to the strange world of dreams, and with lots of screens to fight through, it should keep you interested for hours to come . . . eight and a half to be precise.**

OVERALL 71%



OTHER FORMATS
Conversions of Frightmare **are forthcoming for Amstrad CPC and Spectrum – £9.95 Cassette, £14.95 Diskette, and the Spectrum+3 for which no price had been decided upon at time of going to print. It will also be available for PC compatibles at £19.95. All releases are imminent. More 16-bit conversions are on the way, but Cascade could not give us precise details on availability.**

" . . . it should keep you interested for hours to come . . . "

PSYCOPATHWAY TO THE STARS

MAGNETRON
Firebird

Magnetron is Firebird's first Spectrum release from **Graftgold** since that company's founder-members, **Steve Turner** and **Andrew Braybrook** moved their licensing from Hewson. It is written by **Steve Turner**, long-standing Spectrum developer, using his previous *Quazatron* as a departure point.

Eight orbiting satellites are currently threatening the planet Quartech. KLP-2, a psychopathic little engineering droid, whose favourite pastime is dismantling fellow robots, has been sent to disable the four reactors on each of the satellites – easier said than done, since they are guarded by 16 different types of droid. The main game presentation is in flick-screen, isometric 3-D, showing various levels connected by ramps.

There are several options when it comes to tackling enemy droids: they may be destroyed by the use of 'frisby' power disks, mortars and boomerangs, or by grappling with them at close quarters, and then using the dismantled parts to build a replica of KLP-2 incorporating the enemy's abilities.

The risk in grappling is that target droids are protected by a self-destruct sequence that counts down when the enemy droid is grabbed. Enter the sub-game: a grid of nine squares appears, and three types of icon: bomb, diamond and box-shaped. To prevent detonation the three bomb shapes must be placed along the bottom row of the grid before time runs out. To purloin the salvaged parts, the other two rows also have to be completed in order. When the main game resumes after a successful grapple, the identification number of the droid you are controlling is displayed at the top of the screen. If the replica is destroyed, KLP-2 returns to his previous chassis.

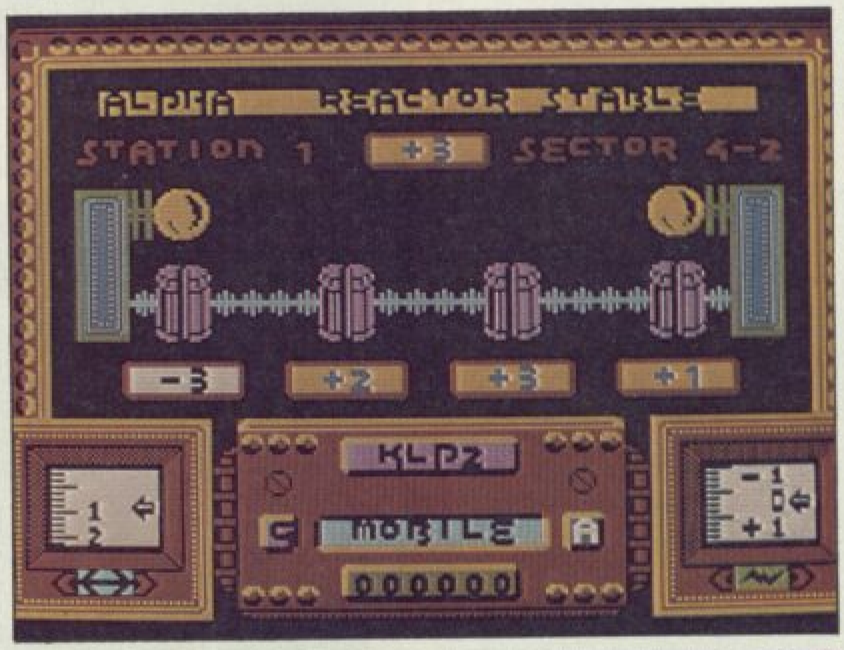
This is a straightforward reworking of the transfer sub-game Andrew Braybrook first used in his Commodore 64 hit, *Paradroid*, followed through in Steve's Spectrum rewrite, *Quazatron*, and which since has become a programmer's standard library technique for beefing up games. It is, however, rarely used as elegantly in plot terms as in *Magnetron*.

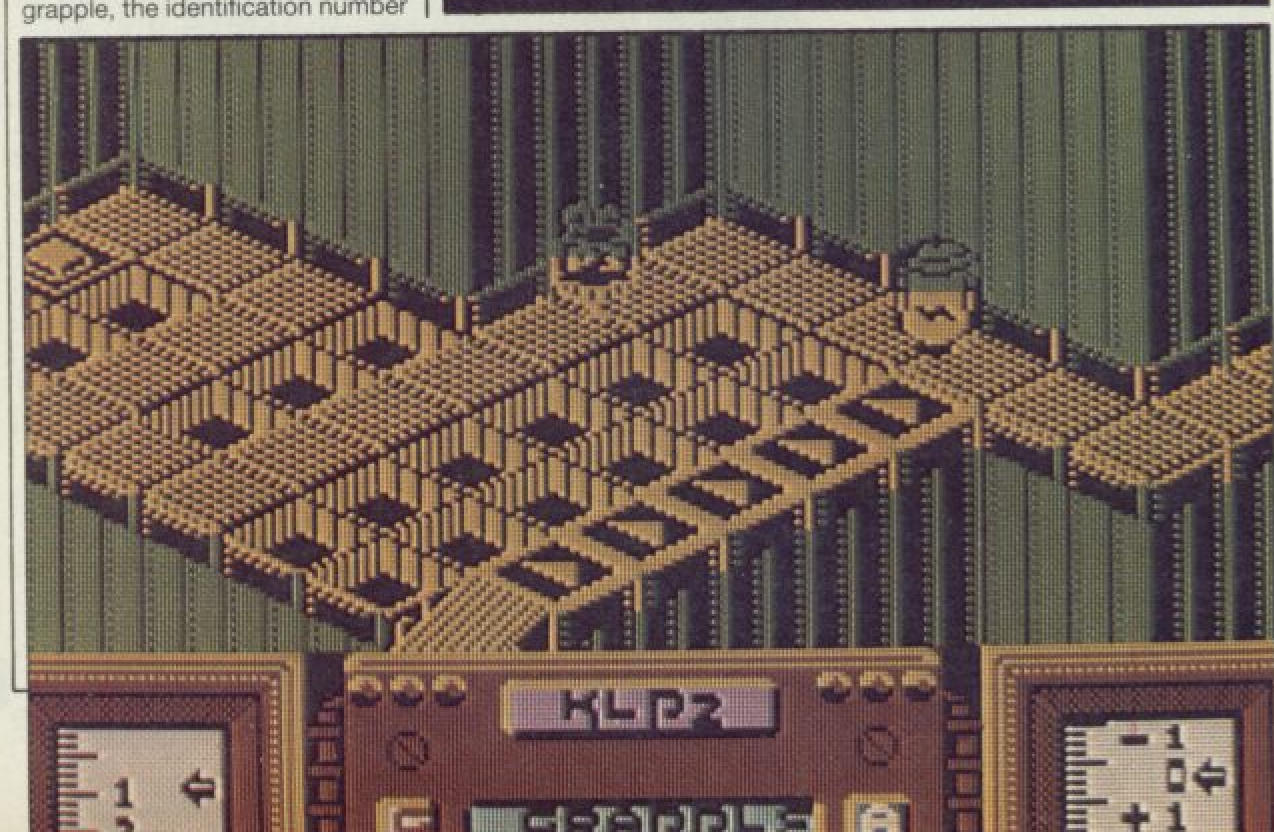
Reactors are shut down by reducing or overloading their power. Each has four containers holding either a positive fuel rod cr a negative inhibitor. Replacing them with rods KLP-2 is carrying shuts them down if the overall charge goes below one, or overloads it if it goes over five. When all four containers have been disabled, KLP-2 is free to teleport to the next satellite.

KLP-2's movement is affected by his own weight and the amount he carries – climbing and steering becomes more sluggish if he is too heavy – and by magnets, indicated by arrows, which either aid or hinder progress depending on whether the droid is positively or negatively charged.

With every action, energy is drained and can only be regained by grappling with droids containing good power units – usually lower numbered droids – but beware, these are the most difficult to defeat.

Computer access points on all levels provide status displays: sphere icons display current reactor status, which satellite the player is at (1-8), and grid coordinates of the current sector; droid icons display KLP-2's current status, and if in replica form, its various parts can be seen if the security class is below or equal to that of the current replica; box icons – if a sufficient security pass is held – display available weapons and devices that can be acquired.





SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

Great effort has gone into the detailed graphics in an attempt to break the monochromatic mould of recent games, and it works quite well, with up to three colours on the screen at one time. Intricately woven gameplay elements neatly cover up the fact that this really is a very close reworking of Quazatron. **The grapple sequence, however, is novel, using icons to battle for control instead of a circuit board. It is an old idea, but** Magnetron **is damned playable.**

OVERALL 80%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

It's a curious fact, that although the sound and graphics are understandably better on the Commodore, Magnetron **is a much better Spectrum game, and for long-standing C64 owners, it offers little over** Paradroid **apart from its reorientation into isometric 3-D. As one has come to expect from Graftgold, the presentation is excellent, with great attention to detail. The end result is a fine, playable game, but likely to be of more value to players who do not have** Paradroid.

OVERALL 73%

"Intricately woven gameplay elements cover up a very close reworking . . . "

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THALAMUS
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SAVE £3.50
on all product!

Calling all **Commodore 64** owners! Stavros Fasoulas hasn't had a miss yet – three games – three hits in a row. Now Thalamus is making this special offer to TGM readers, a chance to get all three and save **£10.50**. But you can also buy **Sanxion**, **Delta** or **Quedex** individually for only **£6.49** on cassette or **£9.49** on disk and save £3.50 per title into the bargain. And it's all for a good cause too – helps pay Stavros to get out of the Finnish army so's he can program some more games . . .

THALAMUS
HUNTER'S MOON
SAVE £3.50

Far from home, far from £9.99 – well, £3.50 away actually. Yes, save £3.50 on Thalamus's latest hit game on the Commodore 64/128, **Hunter's Moon** by ace games designer Martin Walker. Reviewed in TGM003, Hunter's Moon was rated at 90%, and by our critical standards, that's high! So go grab yourself a piece of megablasting in psychedelic space at only **£6.49** on cassette or **£9.49** on diskette – but don't forget, Commodore 64/128 owners only need apply!

GREMLIN GRAPHICS
SAVE £2.50
On a couple of sequels

It's sequelmania on a budget if you go for this great offer from Gremlin graphics. **Jack The Nipper II** and **Mask II** are under the hammer here for **Spectrum**, **Commodore 64/128** and **Amstrad CPC**. There's the return of the pesky child in a nappies and platform game scenario or an action-packed battle against V.E.N.O.M. if you want a blast. Get your sequels while they last at **£5.49** on **Spectrum** cassette and **£7.49** for **Commodore 64/128** and **Amstrad CPC** cassettes or **£12.49** on disk.

US GOLD
ROLLING THUNDER
SAVE £1.50

Namco's arcade machine comes into your own home! But get it through this special TGM reader's offer and save yourself a wacking £1.50 off all the versions – that's **Spectrum**, **Commodore 64/128**, **Amstrad CPC**, **Atari ST** and **Amiga**. The prices are as follows: Spectrum **£7.49** cassette; Commodore 64/128 **£8.49** cassette or **£10.49** on disk; Amstrad CPC **£8.49** cassette or **£13.49** on disk; Atari ST **£18.49** and Amiga **£23.49**. **Rolling Thunder** was reviewed in TGM004.

US GOLD
FORTH AND INCHES
SAVE £1.50

Hut! Hut! Hut! Probably the best American Football simulation come across the fish pond is the brand new **Forth And Inches** – and for an explanation of the title, you'll just have to wait. Sorry it's only for the **Commodore 64/128** at the moment, but it's on offer here at £1.50 off the normal price, bringing the price down to **£8.49** on cassette or **£13.49** on disk.

RAINBIRD
MORPHEUS
SAVE £4.00!

At last Andrew Braybrook's epic space shoot-'em-up sets out from its Rainbird nest – if you missed all the details, like how totally brilliant it is, check them out in TGM001. The whole package comes in a large-sized box with Time Slice manual, a poster, a badge and a reference card. **Morpheus** retails in the shops at £14.95 on cassette and £17.95 on disk – and of course it's only for the **Commodore 64/128** – but if you use this special TGM coupon, you can snap up a copy at an amazing £4.00 discount making the prices only **£10.95** on cassette and **£13.95** on disk.

RAINBIRD
CARRIER COMMAND
SAVE £5.00!

Rainbird's 16-bit simulation thriller **Carrier Command** flies in very soon, with solid 3-D graphics and effects that will make your eyes pop out and probably do somersaults too! For further information look back into TGM002 where we previewed the game – it's on offer here for the **Atari ST** and **Amiga**. You would have to pay £24.95 in the shops for this beauty but by the miracles of TGM readers' coupons, Rainbird are letting us give it to you at a saving of £5.00 – so all you pay is **£19.95** for either format.

FIREBIRD
MAGNETRON
SAVE UP TO £4.00!

Magnetron is the follow up to Steve Turner's *Quazatron*, the story of a cute robot chappie. And considering Steve's tremendous reputation, this is a spectacular offer, specially for TGM **Spectrum** or **Commodore 64/128** readers. Normally priced at £14.95 on disk and £8.95 on cassette for Commodore 64/128 or £7.95 for the Spectrum cassette, using this coupon you can get **Magnetron** at £4.00 off C64 disk, making it **£10.95**; or £2.00 off either Spectrum or Commodore cassette, making it **£5.95** Spectrum and **£6.95** Commodore 64/128.

FIREBIRD
IO
SAVE UP TO £4.00!

Firebird's first all-action arcade mayhem shoot-'em-up is called, rather shortly, **Io**. This one's only for the **Commodore 64/128**, and pushes your firebutton-pumping fingers to the limit. Out soon in the shops, it will set you back £8.95 on cassette and £14.95 on disk, so why not take this chance to claim £2 off cassette and £4 off the disk version? That makes Io with this coupon a mere **£6.95** for cassette and **£10.95** on disk – can't say fairer than, that can we guv?

PRESS ANY KEY

GREMLIN GRAPHICS
SAVE £2.50
On a couple of sequels

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DOH STRIKES BAT

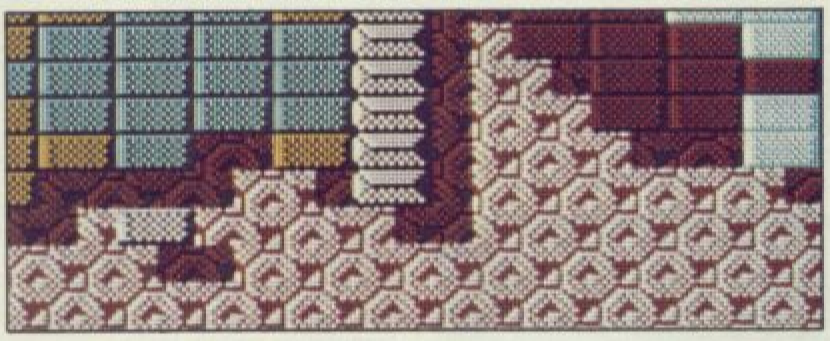
ARKANOID, REVENGE OF DOH
Imagine

Breakout style games, with their quirky insistence on disguising the simple bat and ball theme by providing intricately woven scenarios, turned into a veritable second-flood of titles after the success of Imagine's *Arkanoid*. Now the company is cashing in again on its own success with an *Arkanoid II. Revenge Of Doh* is a conversion from **Taito**'s coin-op sequel.

At the end of *Arkanoid* the evil dimension controller, Doh, was finally beaten into submission and banished from the universe. All was peaceful but as the conquering space craft cruised homeward little did the occupants know that 40,000 years later history would repeat itself. During that time Doh nursed his wounds and learned evil arts, evolving into a much more powerful and vindictive form, ready at last to unleash his revenge on the universe.

A vast alien spaceship, Zarg, has entered the universe. Failing to answer any communications signals it is scanned using radar xenographic equipment, revealing the presence of Doh. Deploying the space craft Vaus II you must destroy Zarg's protective barriers and so prevent Doh from exterminating the universe – so more interesting than a mere bat and ball . . .

The player controls the left/right and fire movements of Vaus II and must deflect the bouncing energy bolt into the barrier. The barrier consists of different coloured bricks. The colour of the brick determines how easily it is eliminated. Some require a number of hits while others are completely indestructible. This would all be too easy, of course, so varied alien lifeforms descend randomly towards you to hinder progress. Energy capsules are hidden beneath some bricks which are released when the bricks are destroyed. Capsules can be collected by manoeuvring Vaus II into them before they drop off the edge of the screen. The energy effect they have on Vaus II is denoted by a letter within the capsule. These include extra lives and limited-fire laser guns; however, not all the effects are desirable.



COMMODORE 64/128 AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95

These formats will be available by the time you read this review; version updates next month. Gameplay is expected to be identical.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.97

Revenge Of Doh **features colourful, smooth-moving graphics which are excellently drawn, while the music is quite good even on the 48K Spectrum.** Breakout **have become pretty standard, but it is the new implementations which distinguish** Revenge Of Doh **from the rest of the genre, such as the capsules idea first used in** Batty, **which has been expanded to give the game a greater scope. If there are any Spectrum games players who haven't as yet got a** Breakout **style game, this is the one to get.** Revenge Of Doh **is, to date, the definitive version on the Spectrum.**

OVERALL 81%

" . . . new implementations distinguish Revenge Of Doh **from the rest of the genre . . . "**

MULTI-COLOURED SWAPPI SHOP

GET DEXTER II
Infogrames/ERE Informatique

The original, *Get Dexter*, released through PSS in April 1986, was one of the first games to really exploit the Amstrad's sound and graphics capabilities properly. Now **Infogrames** have released the sequel, retitled from its French counterpart *L'Ange de Cristal*, with excellent graphics, quality sound and deeply puzzling gameplay.

The android Dexter and his monoped sidekick Scooter, find themselves on the planet Kef. Kef is inhabited by three races: the animals, the Swappis and the Stiffens. Once a peaceful land, Kef took a turn for the worse when a group of Stiffens broke away, forming a secret religious sect, and slowly began killing off Swappis.

Dexter has offered to help the Swappis by discovering the Stiffen sect's whereabouts and hopefully destroying it, but the Swappis want him to prove that he is capable of doing the job properly.

To do so Dexter is asked to complete three tasks listed on wall plaques in the Swappi houses. Additional clues are found on information boards scattered around Kef. Detailing the tasks would give too much away . . . but as they are unravelled, the more Dexter explores his world.

Kef is displayed in glorious isometric perspective, all in full colour, many fantastic and humorous creatures roaming its lawns and houses. One idea rarely used is that any animated objects in the game can move from screen to screen – whereas normally (say, *Head Over Heels*) creatures are restricted to one room only.

As in the prequel, there are loads of objects scattered around the rooms most of which can either be picked up and dropped, thrown, or pushed around. A useful way to use objects is to present them to a Swappi who, by its very name and nature, swaps it for the object it is carrying – the advantage to this becomes apparent when solving some of the puzzles. Scooter is also a bit more useful this time around – Dexter can call him back and tell him to fetch an object, though the objects are restricted to those in the current room.

Get Dexter II is packed full of little features which add more fun to what is essentially a puzzle/exploration game – and the end is great, but you will have to work out how to get there yourselves . . .



ATARI ST
The Atari version is coming soon, watch out for a version update. It's the same game, but the graphics will be of higher definition.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Get Dexter II **is a superb sequel and one which will hold your interest for a long time. A graphical masterpiece of programming with a highly complex series of puzzles to keep any ardent, and experienced, arcade adventurer glued to their monitors for a long while,** Get Dexter II **is definitely not for the novice; practice in map making and knowing where to look for clues are essential if you're going to really get into the game. The cassette version is slightly smaller than on disk – every room is disk-accessed – because it wasn't possible to squeeze everything into 64K. One plus is that the original** Get Dexter **is included in the package free.**

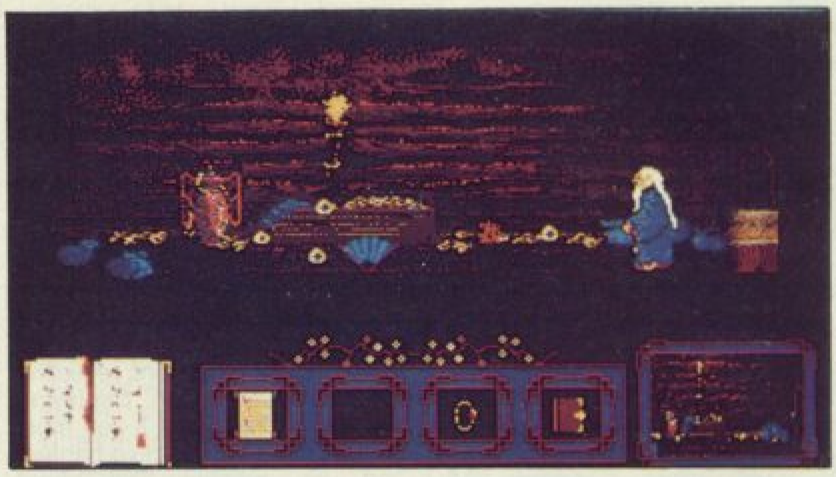
OVERALL 87%

" . . . a superb sequel and one which will hold your interest for a long time."

PRESS ANY KEY

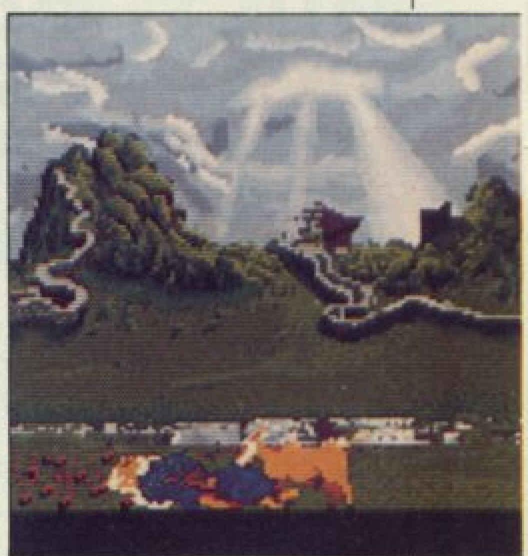
WHAT YA CHINA DO?

GOLDEN PATH
Firebird



A long time ago, when the people of Amtix ruled the land of CPC, there came to them from the Amsoft dynasty a tale of the mysterious East, drawn from Chinese mythology. The story was looked upon by the revered ones of Amtix with troubled brows and much disdain, for it was a tale not of the standard with which they had become accustomed. It gained no favour and so became lost and all-but forgotten in the mists of time. And it came to pass that the mighty Firebird heard of this, considered the story's plight and concluded that it would be worthy of resurrection if it were to be told by a storyteller of greater memory than the original mythologist. So it was that the Firebird raised *The Golden Path* from the ashes and commissioned Amiga and Atari to portray the legend to the land.





Y'in Hsi's father died at the brutal hands of Ch'un Kuei when that Warlord took his Palace by storm – naturally the lad, now a monk, wants revenge. To end the tyranical rule of Ch'un Kuei he must travel the Golden Path to the land of mystery and legend, there to do battle with the soldier of war and in so doing become the most powerful Emperor in China's history.

Golden Path is a graphical adventure wherein you take the role of Y'in Hsi as he undertakes his perilous journey to meet Ch'un Kuei. The screen is split into four windows, the primary one depicting the current graphical location and events taking place therein. Bottom left is the Book Of Law which gives text descriptions of locations and events when clicked on. To its right is the inventory, and far right is a small graphical representation of the current location showing the Golden Path: click on it to display your score. A vine encircles the inventory window portraying Y'in Hsi's strength, which slowly withers and dies as time progresses or if Y'in Hsi acts in an unenlightened way (kicking the life out of a starving man for example), although it may be rejuvenated by completing certain tasks.



YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Y'in Hsi is mouse-controlled: a cursor in the guise of a Chinese symbol adorns the screen, and moving it to the left or right of the picture and pressing the left hand button determines his direction. Clicking above or below his head dictates whether he will take the high path out of a location (if one exclamation mark if the object may be used in some way.

Moving the cursor away from Y'in Hsi and clicking the right button while has is carrying an object makes him throw that object at the cursor's position. Should he be empty handed, the cursor placed on him and the right button clicked, he kicks out, martial arts style, with his feet. In the same way moving the cursor away from him and clicking the



exists) or the low path. Resting the cursor on Y'in Hsi and pressing the left button enables him to pick up objects in his immediate proximity, or drop anything he may be carrying. Clicking the right button whilst the cursor is over the monk allows him to use the particular item he has in his hands to perform a particular task (give the flowers to the pretty girl for example); a question mark appears over his head if no use is found and an button makes him punch anything within reach. This control system may sound complex but is simplicity itself once grasped.

Graphically the locations and characters in *Golden Path* attractive and in most cases the animation is entertaining. Sound effects accompany the action and there is a slightly tedious music track which plays egg fried rice music for far too long and much too often.

AMIGA

Diskette: £19.95

The backdrops for the trek along the Golden Path are extremely well done as is the way old Y'in Hsi moves from location to location. Gameplay is instantly grabbing and although there are many and varied ways of dying quickly the inclination to have one more go is very strong. The fact that there is a save game feature also adds to its addictiveness. There are 100 steps to take along the Golden Path and 37 locations to visit. Puzzles within the game are fairly straightforward to begin with (using the tweezers to get the thorn out of the Dragon's paw - dragons have paws? – for example) and should therefore not deter non-adventurous players from having a look. Golden Path **is lovely to look at, interesting to play and sufficiently enticing to warrant perseverance.**

OVERALL 78%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

Apart from arriving on two disks, the Atari ST version of Golden Path **is identical to the Amiga.**

OVERALL 78%

" . . . the inclination to have one more go is very strong."

PLAY IT AGAIN SHAM

TIME FIGHTER

CRL

Software Invasion is the programming team who brought us the dubious delights of *Plasmatron* and *Lifeforce*. Here they squeeze the last ounce from that omnipresent computer game topic, time travel.

Not to be confused with an attempt on that fine coin-op *Time Soldiers*, *Time Fighter* does share similar subject matter. You play the part of a man who has been given the ability to travel through time. This may sound like a stroke of luck but it has its drawbacks. Each time you arrive in a new timezone the problems of that era are yours to contend with. Armed with weapons suitable to each period, you fight off stone-age men, cowboys, medieval soldiers and space men as you run and jump from one end of the screen to the next.

The primary play area shows the action, depicting both you and the enemy as matchstalk men against a suitably periodic backdrop.



Below this is a status panel showing energy, lives remaining, the current score, high score and the weapons available to you. The main aim of the game is to travel through each timezone in sequence from the stone-age to the future, killing everyone you meet on the way and surviving long enough to reach the end of the level. However, pressing the space bar allows you to visit forthcoming levels and play them up to a point without fear of losing a life, although no score is awarded.

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

The animation of the people in Time Fighter **is implemented quite well, it is a shame the same cannot be said of the game. Movement is painfully slow with the odds impossibly stacked against the hero; enemies attack thick and fast without mercy and the main character seems unable to react fast enough to contend with them. The horizontal scrolling is jerky and the backdrops are drab. Any challenge this sham of a game may have at the outset soon dissolves into nothing, and holding the joystick rapidly becomes not worth the effort.**

OVERALL 31%

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £9.95

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Versions for these machines are in the pipeline and, oddly, the game may work better on the Spectrum. It will certainly have to try hard though . . .

"Any challenge soon dissolves into nothing,"

PRESS ANY KEY

JUST ONE C

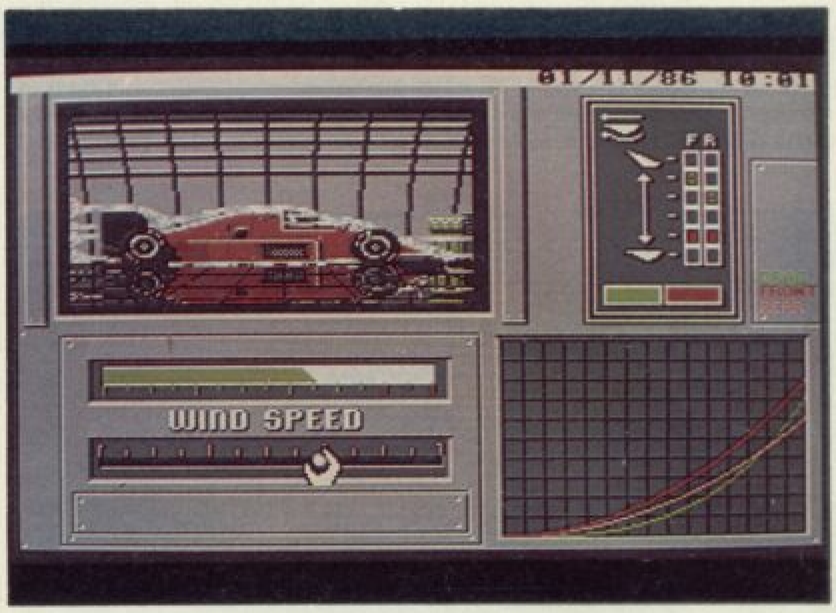
FERRARI FORMULA ONE
Electronic Arts

With the backing of the Italian motor company Ferrari, Electronic Arts have devised a car racing game with a difference. In *Ferrari Formula One* the entire racing team is under the player's control, from the engineers and pit crew through to the driver himself. Successful group co-ordination is essential, not just good driving.

Starting at Fiorano, Ferrari's home base and test circuit, the Ferrari team can use the facilities present to set up the car ready for the World Championship Grand Prix season. The Fiorano wind tunnel allows the team to experiment with different wing settings on the car to achieve maximum downforce while keeping drag to a minimum.

In the dyno room the Ferrari engine is tested and its horse power, torque and fuel consumption ratings are altered to suit each track. The wind tunnel and dyno room are not present at the tracks, the team has to return to Fiorano. However, a garage on site allows for complete overhauls. Each of the car's systems – suspension, the engine, the gearbox, wings and the tyres with their various compounds for wet and dry surfaces – can undergo major refits and alterations. In both garage and pits a bird's eye view of the car is offered and to alter any system just click on the relevant part of the car and use the mouse to change the control panel settings

If the player needs help in the garage, Mauro the computerised crew chief can be consulted to make suggestions on what adjustments are best for the car. Any suggestions made are marked in red, although the player has the final decision on what settings are put into effect. Once the car is set up, its performance can be measured on the Fiorano test circuit. Cameras are set up along the track to measure the car's progress and, using the collated data, problem areas in its performance can be identified and rectified. It is far better to find faults during the test circuit runs then during the Grand Prix season!



The most vital track specifications can only be tested in the Fiorano wind tunnel

ON THE TRACK

Once the Ferrari has been made ready, all that remains is to enter the Grand Prix. Using the race control icon, any track can be selected, any session of each circuit can be attempted (either a practice session, qualification laps, a warm up or the race itself) and the length of the race altered to suit the player. The date can also be changed as well as the driver's name, and at any time the season's standings can be displayed showing the player's total points accumulated and the other drivers' points so far.

A slight departure from reality is possible in that the player can define the Formula level of any race. Formula Three is recommended for novices as all gear changes are automatic and the car is less prone to mechanical and electrical failures than with the higher the Formula levels, where rival drivers become more skillful and more demands are made on the driver in fuel management and track handling. A passenger level allows the player to take a back seat while the car is driven around the course by the computer and player interaction is limited to requesting pit stops.

The racing season takes place over five continents at 16 different circuits, starting with the Brazilian Grand Prix and working through to the final race at Adelaide in South Australia. Practice runs are used to learn the layout of each track and identify trouble spots before attempting the qualification runs. Depending on the qualification time attained during the preliminary runs, the Ferrari will start the race in anything from first to last (eighth) place. Strategy comes into play when the player has to choose the right tyre compounds, wing settings and suspension before the race begins. The weather, the course, its route and the overall length all play a decisive part in setting up the car ready for the race and a wrong decision during set up can cost the driver the race.

General view of one of the circuits, showing the garage, pits and track facilities – all Amiga screens



THE PITS

On the track, the view is from inside the car as it negotiates the circuit. Race information is displayed in the top right corner. The layout of the Ferrari itself is fairly standard showing steering wheel, turbo boost level, oil pressure, fuel percentage, engine temperature and the current RPM rating. Side mirrors offer a view of

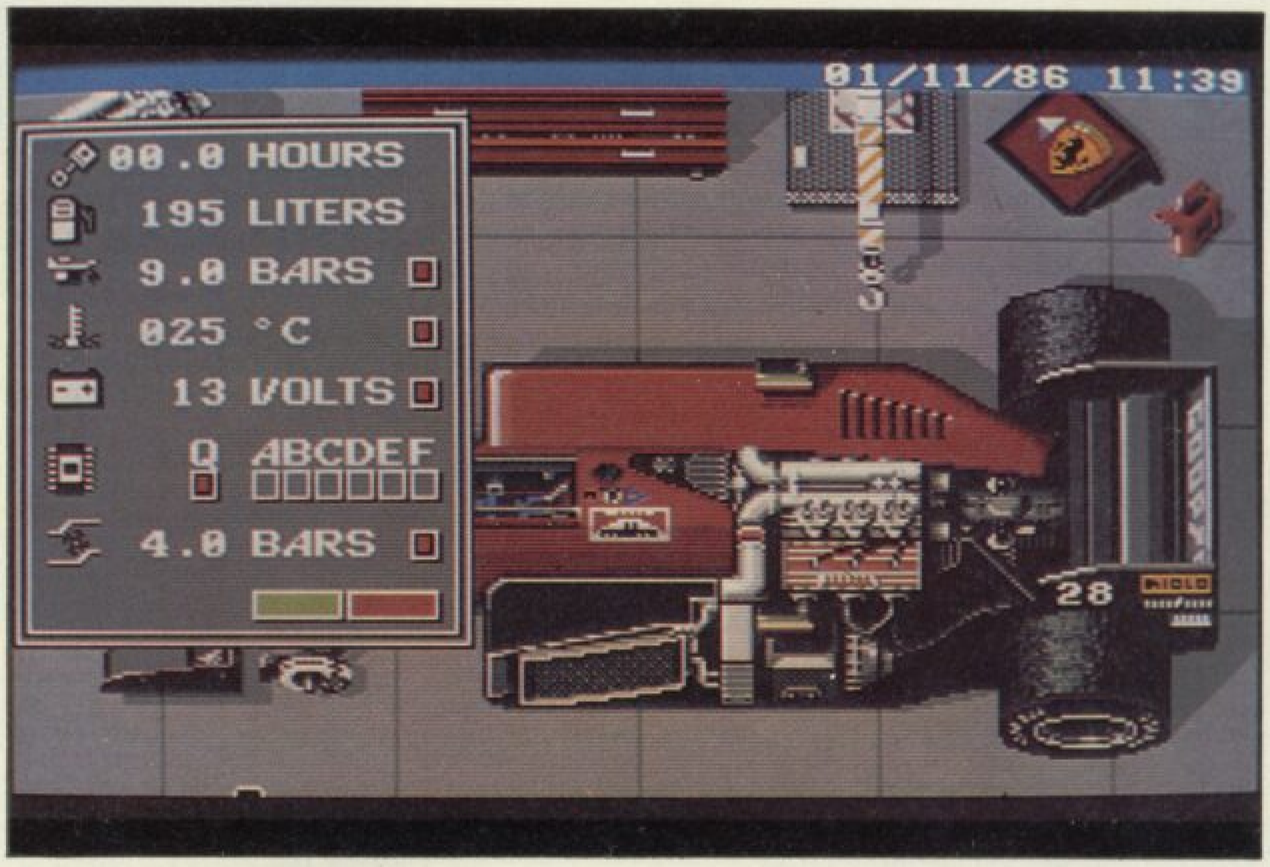
ORNERETTO

any cars approaching from behind and the tyres display the amount of damage taken so far (and will eventually explode if left unchanged in a race).

Where *Ferrari Formula One* differs from most racing car simulations is in the viewpoint adopted for the race. Using the mouse, the driver can look around to the left and right and judge approaching corners from a variety of angles rather than from the standard fixed position of straight ahead. This makes it a little tricky when the car is driving one way and the viewpoint is of another, but once over the control problems it becomes very easy to use.

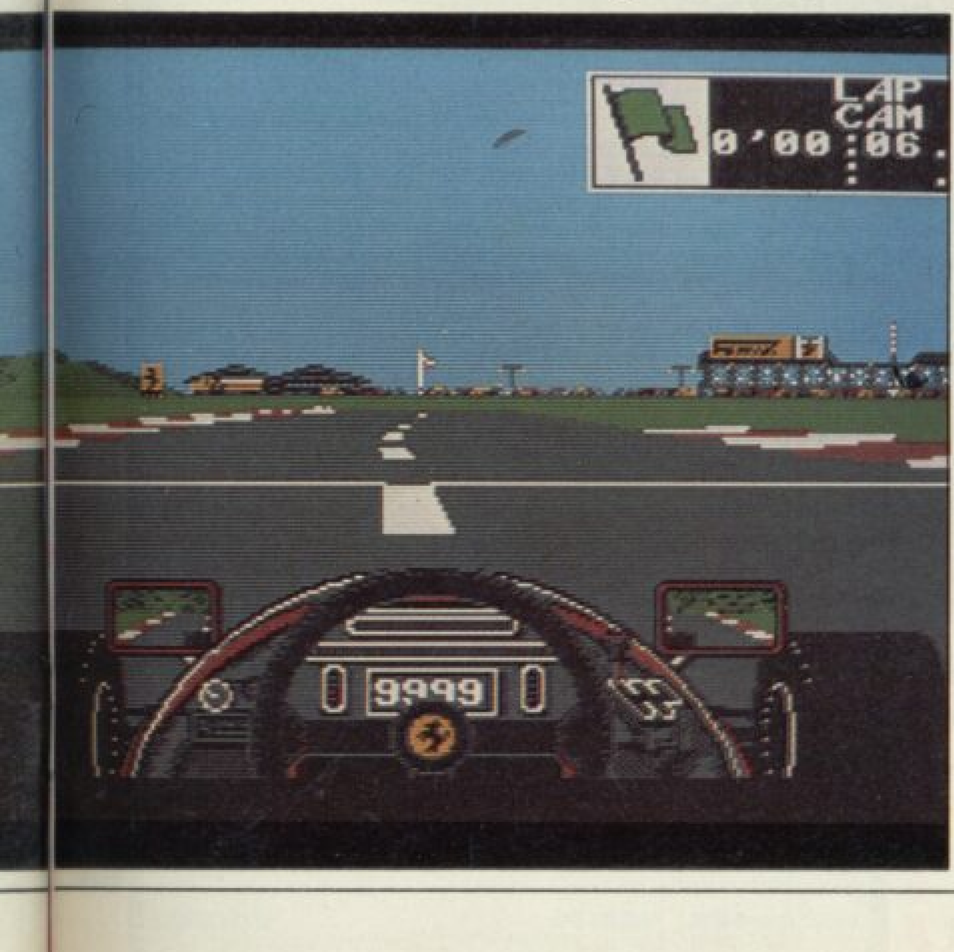
Any system wearing away completely will almost certainly end the race for the Ferrari driver, so regular maintenance and careful engine usage is a necessity. Stop at the pits and the team can be requested to change tyres (and their compounds), repair any damage sustained to the car and alter any system settings which are not achieving optimum performance. All these tasks take up precious time and meanwhile the other drivers aren't hanging around on the circuit. Suffer physical damage from collisions and the team could miss out on several races in the season while the driver is in hospital so don't take risks on the track.

The majority of racing games such as *Pole Position* and *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix* rely on the basic idea of driving around the course to make a game. *Ferrari Formula One* is a departure from the standard and uses the simulation element together with strategic thought to create a game of incredible complexity and truly remarkable realism.



Overhead view inside the garage, with the engine specifications being altered

Driver's view of the track with the detailed wing mirror rear views



AMIGA

Diskette: £24.95

The only similarity Ferrari Formula One **has with** Pole Position **is that it's a car driving game. At heart it's pure simulation and as a result, it probably won't find favour with arcade game players, but simulation fans should lap it up.** Ferrari Formula One **is graphically and atmospherically very good indeed – when the green light flashes you can almost feel the tension as the cars surge forward vying for a good race position. Sound is also used well, the noise of drills in the pits/garage scenes is particularly good and the engine growls of the other cars as they draw near during the race is a neat effect. It's nice to see a game in which the other cars aren't perfect in their driving, they too slow down to take corners, spin off the road, bump into each other and make mistakes in the fight for first place. The game has gone a long way towards recreating the atmosphere of Grand Prix racing and as a result, it's undoubtedly the most realistic yet. In short,** Ferrari Formula One **is a masterpiece of a program which no Amiga owner should be without.**

OVERALL 93%

OTHER FORMATS

Electronic Arts say they are converting for every format known to man except the Dragon and Oric! This certainly includes the ST, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Spectrum (should be interesting) and PC machines. Prices and timings unknown at the moment, but some way off yet. THE GAMES MACHINE will keep you informed.

"Ferrari Formula One **– a departure from the standard – a game of incredible complexity and truly remarkable realism.**"

PRESS ANY KEY

WEAPONS GALORE

CYBERNOID
Hewson

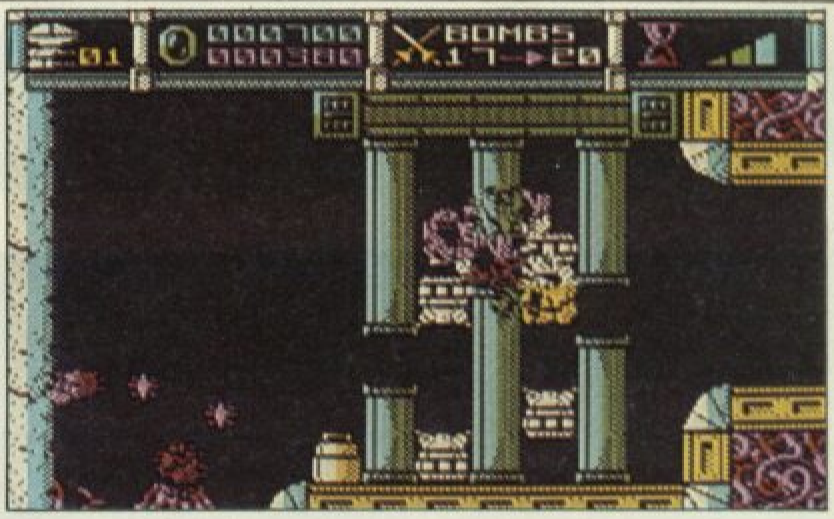
Raffaele **Cecco**, author, among other games, of Hewson's 8-bit big shoot-'em-up hit *Exolon*, teams up with **Nick Jones** to provide yet another orgy of death and destruction – initially on the Spectrum 48/128 and +3 and Amstrad. This is Nick Jones's first original game. His pedigree is more 'backroom' – he used to be with Mikro-Gen, designing music packages and background game graphics. He was also responsible for the Commodore 64 conversion of *Exolon* and is doing the same for *Cybernoid*.

Once again the Galactic Federation is in dire straits. This time the pirates have hit them right where it hurts, in the storage depots.

The solar system's surreptitious scourges have raided the depots and milked them for all they are worth. Valuable minerals, jewels, ammunition and the very latest in state-of-the-art weaponry have been stolen. Now with their resources at an all time low, the Federation has commissioned your mercenary skills to recover the stolen supplies and restore order to the galaxy.

And you are going to need all the available destructive power at your command, because your ship's presence has been detected, and the pirates' planetary defence systems are activated. The planet in question is a maze-like structure of interlocking rooms leading to a depot where any recovered items can be deposited. Each room contains some sort of defence device which has to be immobilised or avoided for that screen to be negotiated successfully, and once a room has been entered the only way out is through the exit leading to the next screen.

In addition to the planet's defences, there are the pirates themselves. Some pirate ships contain an item of the stolen supplies, or additional weaponry, which can be picked up once the ship has been destroyed, but a constant stream of deadly plasma bolts must be avoided while trying to accomplish this.



Pirates ahoy! And always another screen you want to see on the Spectrum

ARMED TO THE TEETH

Your ship is armed with six weapons systems. Laser bolts are unlimited, but are the least effective weapon in that they are only able to destroy pirate ships, otherwise glancing off planetary defences. The other five weapons – accessed through keys 1-5 – are used by keeping the fire button depressed. These systems have a limited supply and can only be replenished by picking up special canisters sometimes deposited by a destroyed pirate. Bombs can destroy large emplacements which are immune to laser fire. Impact Mines can be placed at strategic positions on the screen to halt pirate craft. The Defence Shield temporarily renders your ship invincible. Bounce Bombs ricochet around the screen destroying any emplacements they touch. Seeker tracks down emplacements and destroys them.

Your craft is controlled using left, right and up movements, with gravity pulling it down. Counteracting the effect of gravity takes a while to get used to, especially as some screens require exact positioning of your craft for that screen to be overcome successfully. On arriving at the depot a bonus is calculated based on your success at retrieving the stolen supplies within the a limit, then it is onto the next and harder level.

Cybernoid is instantly playable and addictive. From the word go it is compelling and keeps the player coming back for more and more. It is pitched at just the right difficulty level, not so easy as to be bored within a few games and not so hard as to put the player off, with the Spectrum version probably just a touch harder than the Amstrad. The idea of using several weapons systems as opposed to the standard laser gun adds a new dimension to the genre as different problems require a different weapon, or in some cases more than one is required to overcome a particularly tricky screen. Precision timing and a good deal of luck are the keys to success with this game.

SPECTRUM 48/ 128
SPECTRUM +3
Cassette: £7.99
Diskette: £14.99

Just like Raffaele's Exolon**, the graphics are high quality with plenty of attention paid to detail; colourful and smooth-moving, they put many other Spectrum games to shame. The 128 version features a great music score which runs right though the game, but if it gets annoying it can be switched off. Though little thought is needed to play** Cybernoid**, as the problems are more a question of good timing than lateral thinking, it maintains interest because there is always the desire to see just one more screen or get past a particular section without losing a life. Classic shoot-'em-ups are always fun to play and this is no exception.**

OVERALL 84%

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Noticeably more colourful than on the Spectrum, the Amstrad animation tends to slow down when there are a lot of elements moving on screen at once. Nevertheless this hardly spoils the enjoyment. Sound is a continuous music score which can become a bit grating after a while but can be switched off to leave just the spot FX running. Certainly one of the better shoot-'em-ups to appear for the Amstrad, and well worth looking at.

OVERALL 80%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

The conversion of Exolon**, which, since it is in Nick Jones's hands, should be an accurate representation, will be available by the time you read this review.**



"From the word go it is compelling and keeps the player coming back for more . . . "

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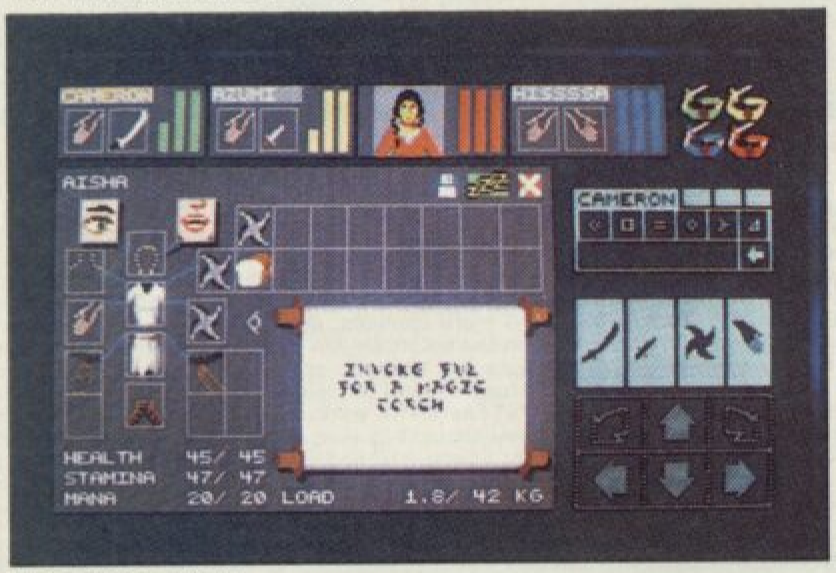
Do you already own a computer
If so, which one do you own? ....

MEN DOWN U

DUNGEON MASTER
FTL Games/Mirrorsoft

After two years of playtesting, *Dungeon Master* has arrived on the ST, boasting 'at least 800K' of data. It is courtesy of **FTL Games**, whose *Oids* is also reviewed in this issue). Future projects include *Sun Dog – The Frozen Legacy* (programmed before *Dungeon Master*) and additional dungeons for this game. At a lower price, these will require the original and involve character interaction.

The laboratory of your master, the Grey Lord, is deep beneath sacred Mount Anaias, where the legendary Power Gem is rumoured to be locked fast. Attempting to capture it he was torn asunder and his good half placed into limbo; the evil part lurks in the dungeons, waiting to wreak chaos on the world: neither can enter the domain of the other. Now knowing the true spell to gain



The selection screen

the Gem, your master needs his Firestaff, lost in the dungeons. As Theron, his servant, you must recover it, so that the gem can be found and order restored.

Other warriors have tried and failed before you, 24 of whom were frozen in the Hall of Champions. Reincarnating four of these, Theron must guide them through the dungeon to retrieve the Firestaff.

The title screen displays a view of the dungeon entrance, with a choice to 'enter' or 'reenter': the latter option is used to load a saved game. Pressing 'enter' loads in the Hall of Champions. This is the first dungeon, which both acclimatises the player to the game system and acts as a character selection screen. It contains a series of mirrors which, when approached, reveal characters trapped within them. These can be examined and freed to join your group as desired.

The screen is divided into three main areas: information about your champions, menus for controlling the game, and a large area showing either the 3-D first-person perspective dungeon or the champion inventory/status screen, toggled as required. The dungeon moves in blocks of a few 'metres' at a time, and the icons allow virtual freedom of movement within this created environment. Movement can be forwards, sideways or back, and the character can turn left or right through 90°.

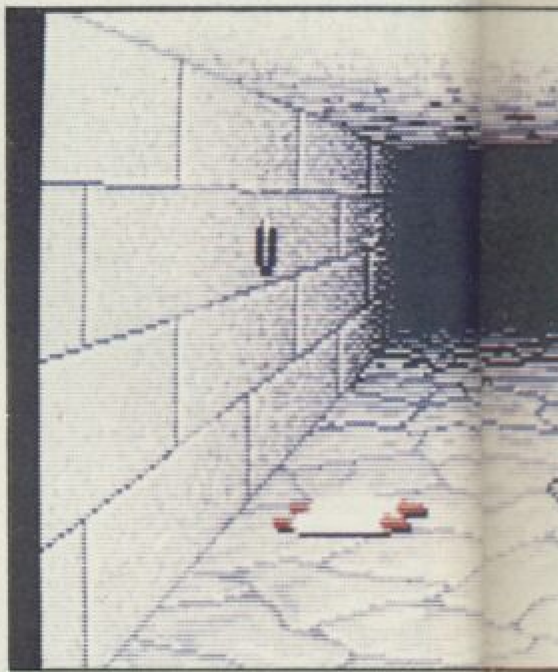
MOUTH, EYES AND HANDS

Each champion is distinguished by the physical attributes of stealth, stamina and Mana (magical energy). Additionally, they may have developed skills, such as fighter, wizard, ninja or priest, and have additional attributes such as strength, dexterity, wisdom, vitality, anti-magic and anti-fire. Whatever their qualities, they all learn from experience and recover by resting.

An inventory for each shows possessions as pictures inside light grey boxes; they can only carry as much as their maximum weight potential allows. Characters can acquire objects and stronger clothes/armour for defence; if they are wounded, the injured body part registers red on their status screen until a healing potion is found. Mouth and eye icons allow eating/drinking and close examination of objects.

Each character has two hands: one for holding objects, and an 'action' hand – usually best for using weapons. By pressing the mouse button against the appropriate character's weapon, a series of sub-menus can be accessed which detail what to do with these implements.

Once the four champions are selected, a leader is nominated, and proves Theron's direct link with the dungeon world. He/she can pick up or throw objects, press buttons and pull levers. The leader may easily be swapped for another at any time.



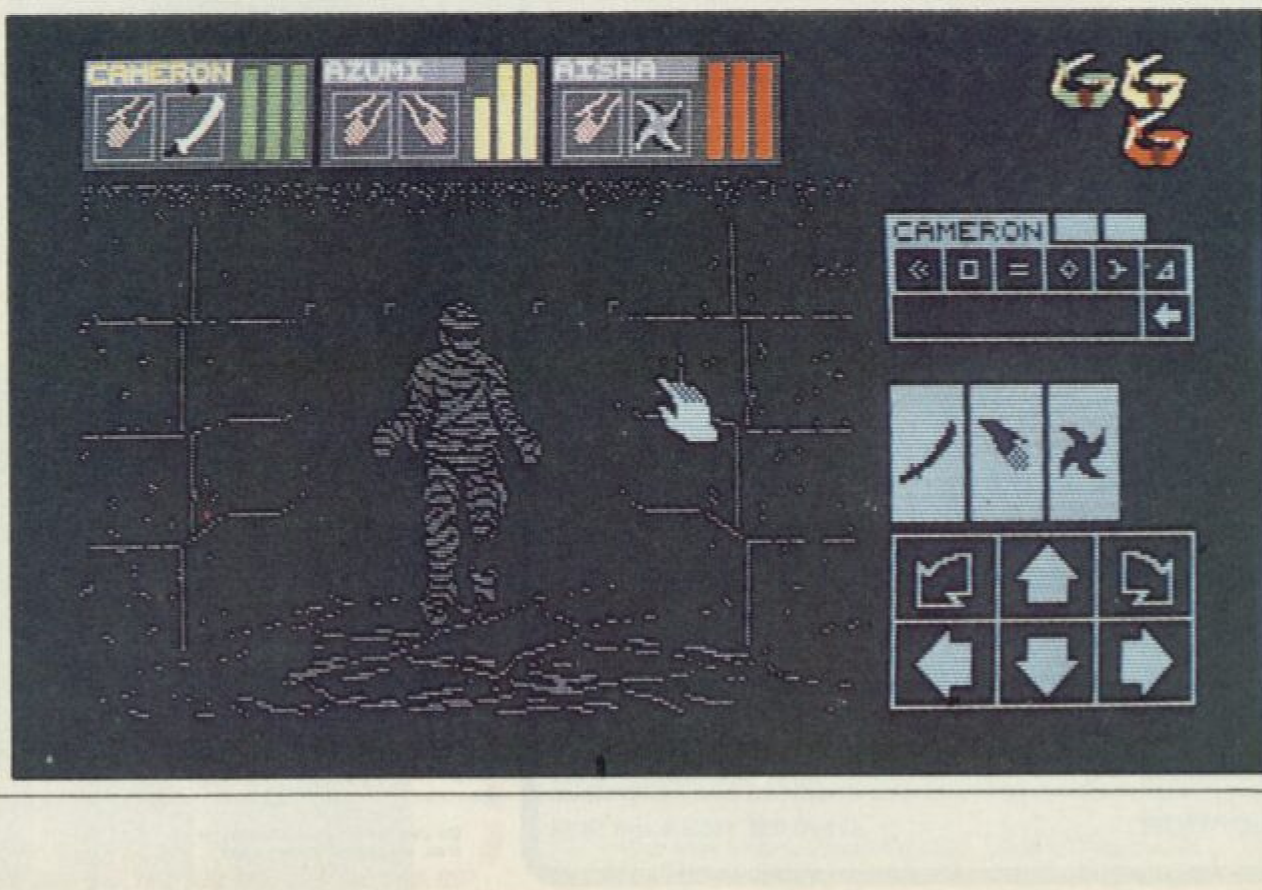
At the entrance to the second, deeper dungeon, there is a scroll and a water bottle waiting to be picked up

Useful objects can be collected along the way, such as boulders or keys to open doors: all have some function and should not generally be discarded. Monsters such as screamers or worm-creatures lurk around corners, and sometimes an object you ignored could have proved very handy . . .

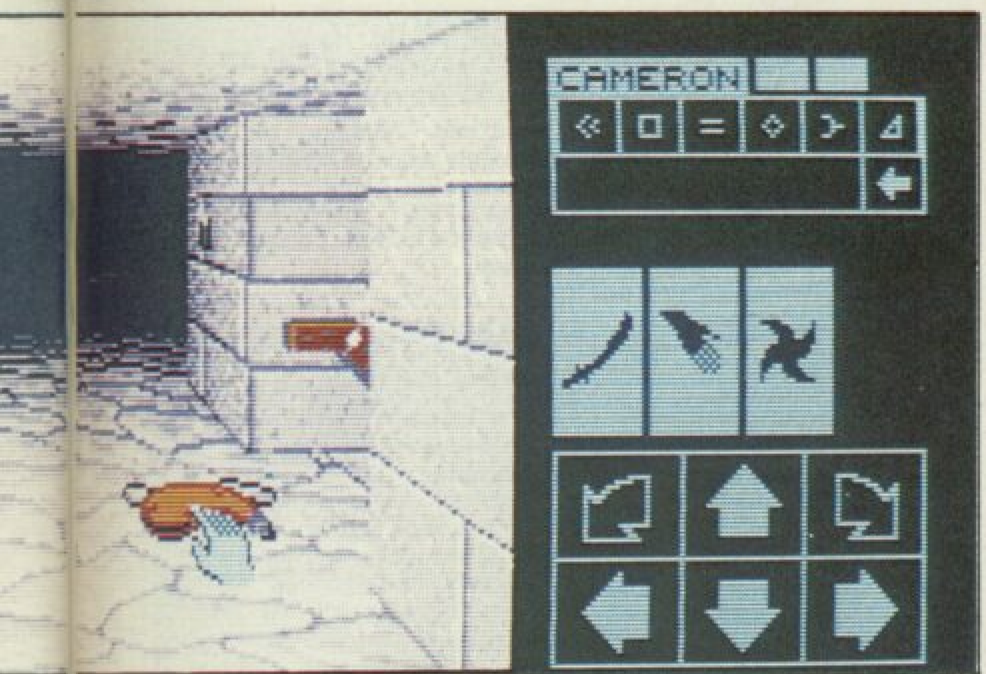
POWER MASTERY

Dungeon Master is played in real-time, so it is wise to keep your warriors prepared for any surprises: spells should be prepared in advance. Food and water are essential, even if it means eating the monster you have just killed. Mapping could prove invaluable, but is sometimes

If you don't cast a spell to light a torch, it can get pretty dark!



UNDER



deceptive. Above all, the game requires practice, since characters strengthen through trial.

After the action commands, the most important aspect is spell casting. Spells need Mana and experience to create and direct, so the more powerful spells are usually beyond your band until continual usage proves fruitful. However, simple (but necessary) spells – such as creating the light for a held torch – can be created by anyone.

Spells require the correct combination of at least two from a series of 24 icons. Power is always the starting point, followed by any from elemental influence, form and class/alignment. Fortunately, the package fully details the nature and result of these incantations.

Bearing all these elements in mind, long, tense and very challenging games can provide great enjoyment. It will take a long time to complete, but (more importantly) it will prove constantly compelling.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £24.99

The atmosphere generated is superb. The wholly engrossing scenario creates a complete world which can be manipulated at will: its depth fully reflects the two years it took to program it. The presentation – an interesting and evocative novella neither too involved to prove turbid nor too short to be unhelpful – is superb. Similarly, the innovative character selection system and icon display are both neatly implemented and quick to use (helpful when you're fumbling for the right weapon). The gameplay echoes this front end; a world believable because of its details: the torch light gradually dimming and needing further magic to refuel it; the real-time feature which adds considerably to the tension; the fact that characters gradually acquire skill or need to be reclothed after resurrection. These details are enhanced by the graphics: large, colourful and clearly drawn creatures, with beautiful use of shading on the dungeon walls. The already eerie and tense atmosphere is increased by the game's sparse but wholly appropriate sound effects. Dungeon Master **is a role player's dream, but capable of providing a good deal of enjoyment for any ST owner.**

OVERALL 94%

OTHER FORMATS

An Amiga version is due for release in a couple of months. No other format plans at this time.

" . . . a role player's dream, but capable of providing a good deal of enjoyment for any ST owner."

SPEEDY SEQUEL

ZILLION 2 – THE TRI FORMATION

Sega

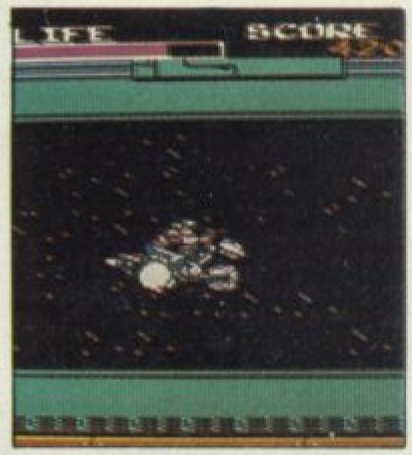
Reviewed only last issue, and already there is a sequel, which must make *Zillion 2* the fastest follow up in history. Continuing where the original left off, *Zillion 2* is biased more towards arcade action compared with the arcade adventure/*Impossible Mission* overtones of *Zillion*. Often, sequels are dire to say the least, but with this one Sega seem to have got it right.

JJ returns for part two and yet again, his friends have wandered off and got themselves captured by the Norsa. JJ is the only one around who can rescue them and in the process destroy the Norsa once and for all (very unlikely considering there are strong rumours of *Zillion 3* coming to the Sega later this year.

Zillion 2 is split into three separate action stages; in the first, JJ rides his jet bike along a horizontally scrolling corridor, firing a laser at the space station defenders. Enemy guards on the passageway return his fire, while jet-pac guards fly around unleashing laser bolts. JJ has to be careful that his bike does not fall down a hole in the corridor floor or run over floor lasers. It can jump to avoid these hazards and fire at any aerial station defenders. If JJ gets hit by a laser bolt or runs over floor lasers, energy is lost, but falling down a hole loses him a life.

When collected from the corridor, power capsules provide JJ with extra energy, greater laser power and even the ability to change *Transformer*-style into a flying robot – handy for avoiding floor hazards. Good coordination in jumping, firing and moving is essential if you are to get through this stage without dying.

In the second stage (more like Zillion), JJ leaves the bike and runs along, blasting enemy guards and other futuristic guardians, using lifts and jumping from platform to platform in the search for his lost comrades. One is held prisoner on each level. By rescuing them, the third level is accessed, where the now-familiar extra-powerful opponent has to be destroyed in order to progress to the next. Later levels bring in more guards, large, powerful killer robots, ever more complex space station layouts and even more vicious end of level foes to defeat.



SEGA

Mega Cartridge: £19.95

The Sega is really coming out of its shell as more games are released with great graphics, varied gameplay, depth and high levels of playability and challenge. Zillion 2 **is one such game, and it's great. Each stage demands a different method of play, and on the later levels a good deal of skill with the joystick is the only way to succeed. In terms of graphics, the game can't be faulted. Even though the Sega flicker rears its ugly head from time to time, the overall graphic quality is notably better than the original** Zillion, **and if anything, is in the same style as Psygnosis's forthcoming** Obliterator **(see Previews). Sega have a winner with the** Zillion **series and let's hope the successful game formulae used in parts one and two can be incorporated into part three (whenever it's released).**

OVERALL 83%

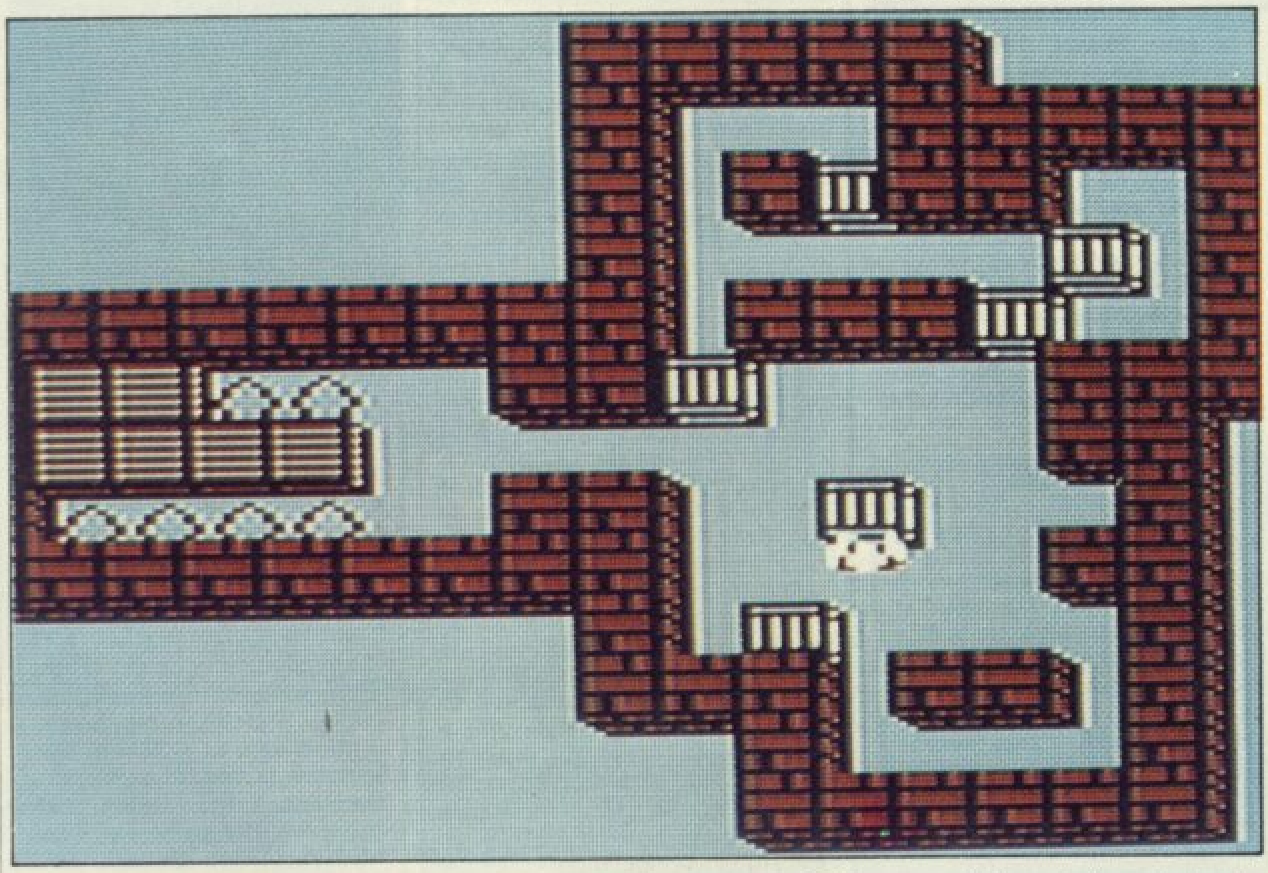
" . . . Zillion 2 **is great . . . Sega have a winner with the series . . . "**

PRESS ANY KEY

LITTLE BOXES, LITTLE BOXES . . .

SOKO-BAN
Mirrorsoft

Some years ago, there was a spate of puzzle games, mostly for the Spectrum; a few very good ones, but most little more than hurried rehashes of ideas in the common domain looking for a quick buck. But with *Tetris*, Mirrorsoft seems to have tapped into a new vein of interest in puzzles exclusively designed to take advantage of a computer's capabilities; *Soko-Ban* is another such. Programmed by **Spectrum HoloByte**, an American company, its overall marketing is handled by Cinemaware, and therefore in the UK by Mirrorsoft.



A foreman's lot is not a happy one. Designated the cleaner of a warehouse comprising 50 untidy levels full of boxes, your task is to move them into preassigned storage areas on each floor. Fortunately, you don't have to move, since the tidying up is done by proxy: you control a mechanical warehouseman and direct him to push the boxes around, one block at a time.

The title screen displays the warehouse lobby, from which the player's own tortuous levels can be designed and saved to disk. Alternatively, pressing the fire button accesses the player selection screen.

The program allows up to four players to participate and their names to be entered. If only one player takes part, there is no time limit on the action; if more than one, a time limit from one to 20 minutes can be defined. At the level selection screen any one of the first 50 levels, each separately loaded, can be chosen – thereafter the mazes which you create yourself are accessed.

The pseudo 3-D warehouse levels are viewed from above, comprising four basic elements, your mechanical warehouseman, walls, boxes, and a storage area. Boxes must be moved to the storage area; however, they can only be *pushed* individually, since the warehouseman cannot pull and cannot move more than one at a time – a simple combination of factors which defines the excruciating complexity and playability of the game.

If a wrong move is made it can be retrieved. But the mistake doesn't always lie in the action performed immediately before, and if the situation proves hopeless at any time the current maze can be reset, or ended in order to select a new one. Upon successful completion of a level, a tune announces the fact and the next, more devious, maze is loaded in.

An information panel at the foot of the screen shows the level, the number of pushes and moves taken, and the amount of time elapsed. Scoring is based on the combined quantity of these elements required to finish the job. Pausing the game displays the present high scores and also allows the current position to be saved.



IBM PC
Diskette: £19.99

The idea behind Soko-Ban **is so deviously simple that it persuades you into actions without anticipating their unfortunate consequences; a lapse of concentration leads to a fatal mistake and a hasty fumble for the level reset switch. The greatest danger is thinking that the solution is easy, or that the innocent combination of boxes couldn't possibly cause so much trouble. This kind of thinking leads to unbelievable frustration, and also proves the game's appealing playability. Fortunately, the programmers have included a few features to assuage the agony: the free level selection system, and the 'undo' a move, 'reset' a level and save game options. A strong sense of strategy and a good chess brain is required – idle arcade adventurers looking for action need not apply! Ignore the functional, simplistic, blocky graphics and utilitarian tapping noises, the game demands excessive mental gymnastics, and should appeal to anyone who wants a real challenge. If you're into puzzles that will extract every last ounce of frustrated concentration,** Soko-Ban **will keep you happy.**

OVERALL 83%

OTHER FORMATS

No news on it yet, but a Commodore 64 version is to be released soon – Tetris **fans, you are warned . . . !**

" . . . a simple combination of factors defines the excruciating complexity and playability of the game."

VERSION UPDATE

The game time forgot . . .

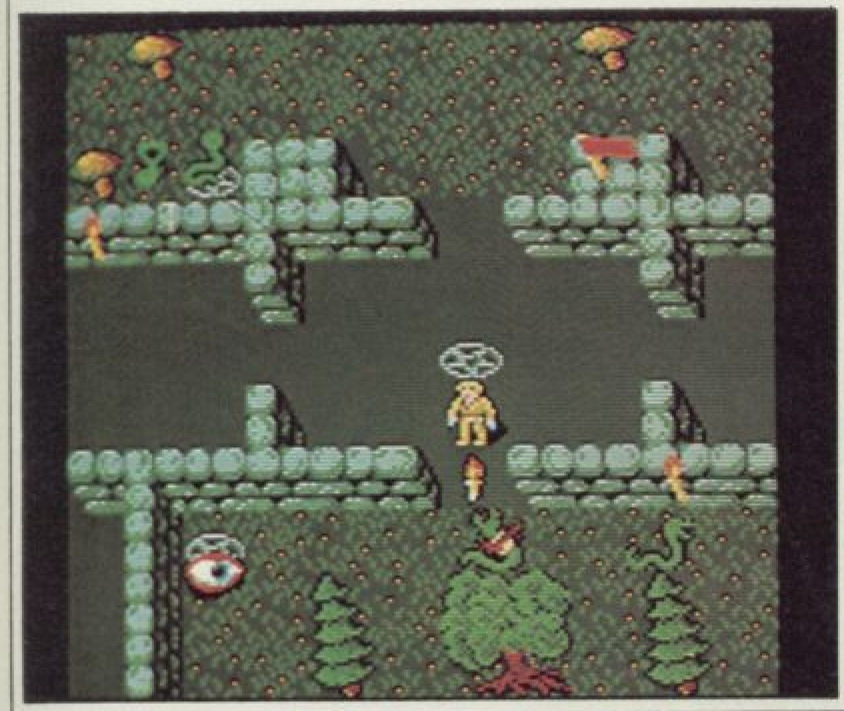
TIME BANDIT
Microdeal

Amiga £19.95

TIME BANDIT was first released for the Atari ST nearly two years ago, and has at last been converted to the Amiga by **Timothy Purves**. It's essentially a *Gauntlet* clone and features 16 different landscapes of varied themes.

The player takes control of the Time Bandit, who starts the game in the 'Timegates', a landscape where all the other levels may be accessed. A nice feature is that any landscape may be tackled at any time – the player isn't restricted to tackle things in a set order. The primary objective is to complete each level by finding the key and unlocking the exit door 16 times. When the sixteenth door is unlocked, an icon is awarded and the landscape is 'closed'. Making the job even harder are hordes of marauding hostiles who waylay the hero and, if not shot or avoided, reduce his lives on contact. There are also plenty of sub-tasks for the player to tackle, including solving a mini text adventure, navigating a space ship, getting a sheep and destroying a giant snake. As the Bandit progresses further into the game, more tasks and new areas are opened up, making the going very tough indeed.

A nice feature is the simultaneous two-player option. Each player has a separate viewing screen, allowing independent exploration (although working together is advisable). When one player dies, his game doesn't end – he haunts the other player as a shadow and helps (or hinders) his partner.



COMMENT

The Atari ST version of Time Bandit **is knocking on the years, but is considered to be a classic. The Amiga version doesn't significantly improve over it, but that's by no means a Bad Thing. The graphics are colourful, with some small and nicely detailed sprites (watch for the expression of surprise as you blast the bouncing heads), but generally they aren't outstanding. The sound is also weak, and could well prejudice Amiga owners, who tend to expect their games to be visually and aurally loud. However,** Time Bandit **has two things which are lacking in many Amiga games of the moment – playability and depth. The action is fast and furious, with a host of hostiles to blow into oblivion. Complementing the shooting element is a text adventure and a** PacMan **game. There are also puzzles to solve, objects to collect, signs to read, tasks to complete . . . The depth is incredible.** Time Bandit **is a tough and challenging game, but offers the player great rewards if he's willing to persevere. Look it up if you think you can take the pace.**

**AMIGA
OVERALL 83%**

VERSION UPDATE

Benson rules twice

MERCENARY
Novagen

Amiga £24.95

LAUNCHED to universal enthusiasm on the Commodore 64 way back in 1985, *Mercenary* and its devious sequel *The Second City* have now been converted for the Amiga.

As a 21st century soldier of fortune you have crash-landed in the central city of the planet Targ, a world beset by war between the Palyars and Mechanoids. Your inter-galactic craft, Prestinium, is beyond repair, but your trusty in-helmet PC, Benson, still remains for assistance. Planning one of several routes to escape is only one concern, however: optimising the spoils of war can bring high rewards. By exploring the city network and its series of underground complexes both can be achieved.

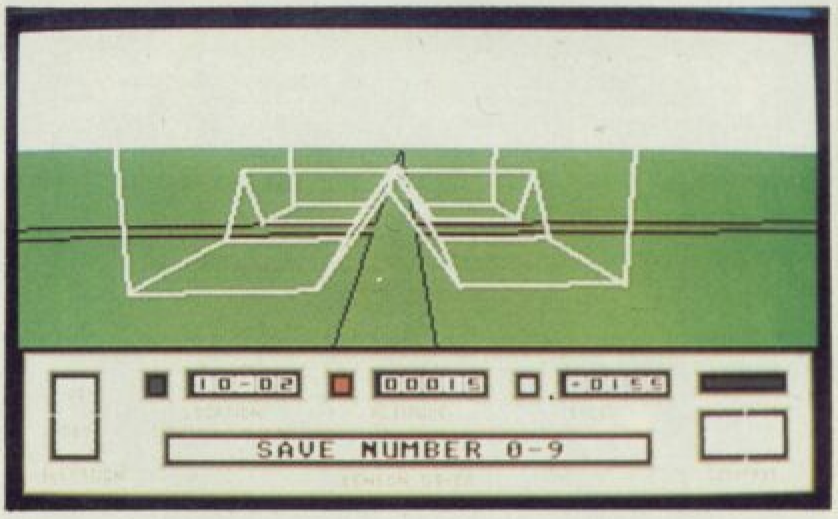
The Second City lurks in the eerie red dust of the southern hemisphere. With no clues or records you crash-land again, every underhand trick conspiring to hinder your escape. Fortunately, in both games the current position can be saved/loaded as required.

The complete package comprises the games plus the Targ Survival Kit – a collection of city and underground maps, technical specifications of craft available, a hint sheet and a short story, *Interlude On Targ*.

COMMENT

The graphical speed of the Amiga *Mercenary* is immediately impressive, from the gorgeous opening starfield sequence to the incredibly fast-moving in-game vectors. The presentation is excellent: subtly effective, grey on-screen display, maps, technical data and an interesting novella. Coupled with the sombre colour-scheme adopted, it generates a menacing and precarious atmosphere. However, it's the gameplay that really sets it apart from most other programs: the total freedom of movement within the city, a wealth of puzzles to solve and objects to trade, the precise acts required to balance Mechanoid and Palyar interests; in short, it's a game with incredible depth. Though something of a literal translation from the Atari ST – the sound takes understatement too far and the gameplay doesn't differ from the 8-bit versions – it's thoroughly deserving of any Amiga owner's attention.

AMIGA
OVERALL 89%



VERSION UPDATE

A fit of peak

CHAMONIX CHALLENGE
Infogrames

PC £19.95

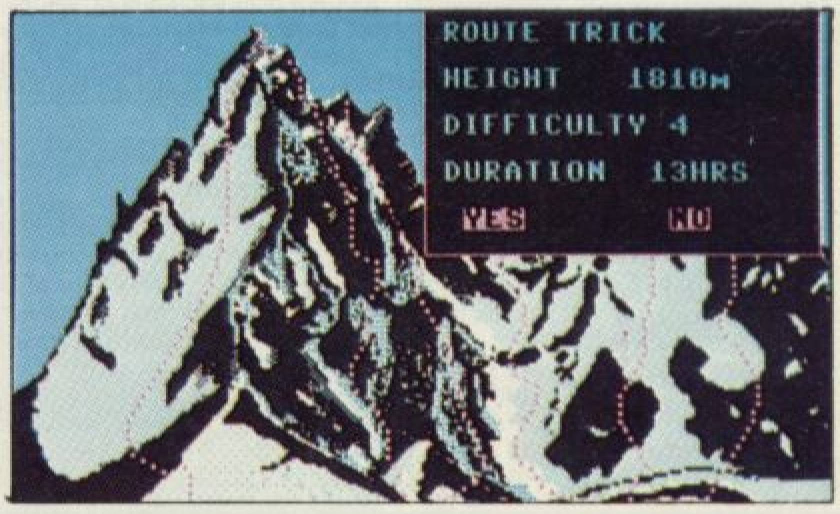
FIRST reviewed in TGM003 (February), *Chamonix Challenge* was awarded a worthy 75% on the ST. The PC version is also multi-load, and involves identical gameplay elements: a choice of five routes to climb (graded accordingly), a selection of items with which to fill your backpack and assist progress, and a rhythmic control method used to move your character. All climbs comprise three stages: a level glacier pitted with crevasses, a snowy slope where rhythm and a sure grip are essential, and (the most difficult stage), the rockface.

Throughout the game hindrances other than the climb are encountered: the elements conspire to freeze you, and tiredness and hunger can soon set in if the correct equipment hasn't been packed.

COMMENT

This game has transiated reasonably well to the PC. The graphics are passable enough, with some neatly cute touches, typical of the Infogrames style, spread over reasonable backdrops. However, the gameplay is just as frustrating as the other formats: pixel-perfect precision is required to leap over relatively small gaps, and the rhythm method needed is tuned to the point of pure annoyance. The presentation is impressive: the options are virtually identical to the ST, and there's a similar neatly animated climber's face registering dismay when a crisis crops up. Setting aside the quibbles, perseverance does dampen the initial tedium, and when you've grown acclimatised to the troublesome control-method, there is a great deal of satisfaction to be gained from conquering a peak.

PC
OVERALL 68%



VERSION UPDATE

Torqueing choppers

GUNSHIP
MicroProse

Atari ST
Diskette: £24.95



In all respects, but especially on the graphics, the best version yet

GUNSHIP on the ST, like the Apache helicopter itself, is a product long overdue. Since its Commodore 64 debut there have been rumours as to just how good the ST version could be. Totally rewritten to take advantage of the 16-bit machine's capabilities and power, *Gunship* has finally arrived, and the result is what ST owners have been waiting for. Across all the formats, worldwide sales of the simulator have been in excess of 250,000 units, and needless to say MicroProse can expect continued success with what is the greatest helicopter combat simulator yet released.

COMMENT

Many of the ideas incorporated into the PC version come to light in the ST Gunship**. The mouse and joystick controls are very smooth and the sensation of flight is superlative. Apart from the enhanced graphics and improved speed, the game is essentially the same as the PC version. The missions haven't undergone change and the game is still immensely playable. Considering the weak nature of the ST sound chip, the effects of whirring rotors and flak explosions come across really well. The PC version was good and on the ST it's even better. With the recent release of the excellent** Project Stealth Fighter **and now a quality conversion of** Gunship**, 1988 looks set to be MicroProse's finest hour.**

ATARI ST
OVERALL 85%

VERSION UPDATE

Up in arms

UNIVERSAL MILITARY SIMULATOR
Rainbird

IBM PC: £24.95



THE IBM PC has had a long-standing as a more upmarket machine when it comes to its leisure use. Strategy games, simulations and games requiring extensive use of the player's brain were the order of the day, but over the last couple of years there has been a marked increase in the number of PC arcade games. Now, the PC goes back to its grass roots with the release of the *Universal Military Simulator* by Ed Isenberg and D Ezra Sidran (the game's designer) through Rainbird. *UMS*, reviewed in detail in TGM003, is the first of a new generation of wargame construction kits using 3-D battlefields combined with immense flexibility to generate any battle of any time past, present or future, from fact or fiction.

COMMENT

UMS **looks set to revolutionise the computer wargame and on the PC it is a giant leap from the standard two-dimensional maps of previous wargames. The on-screen command selection system works much better than the drop down menus for issuing commands as used in the Atari ST version. At a single glance, all of the required commands are displayed on screen giving the program a very user-friendly air about it (more so than on the ST). Where it is let down is in the PC's graphics handling. Movement markers, combat units and ground features tend to merge into one large black mass if grouped closely together, this problem is even more apparent if they're in the distance. The solution is to use the zoom-in facility or adopt a different viewpoint but it can still be a problem if the wargamer wants to look at the battlefield as a whole. Apart from this problem, and other slight graphical differences, the program is still as flexible and powerful in its use as the ST version was. If you're looking for the ultimate wargame on the PC then look no further.**

IBM PC
OVERALL 92%

Hear The Force, Luke

STARWARS
Domark

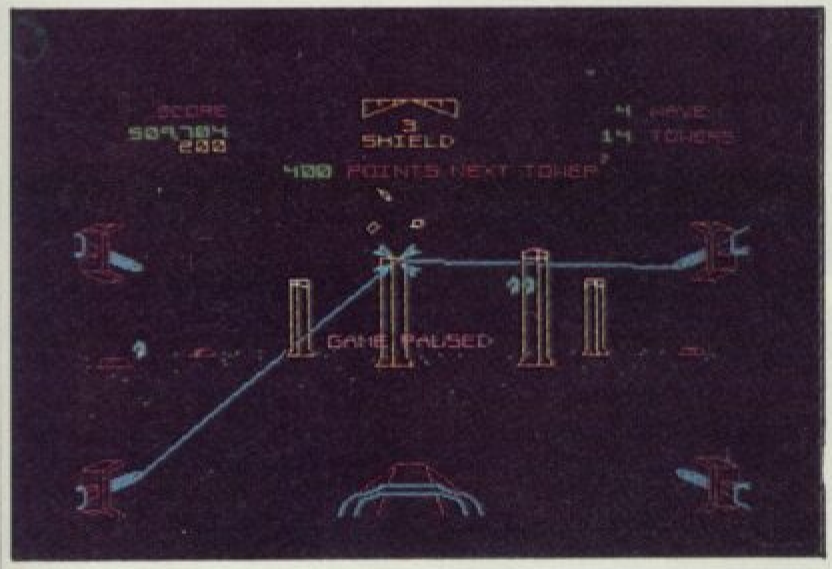
Amiga £19.95

The Amiga version of this ageing arcade game has arrived at last: the other formats have been with us for a couple of months.

The basic objective is to destroy a sequence of Death Stars; the difficulty of the task differs according to the level tackled. Initially there are three: easy (wave one), medium (three) or hard (five): starting on wave one results in a struggle against TIE-fighters followed by a hazardous trench sequence on the Death Star, where enemy lasers must be avoided. Hitting the exhaust port at the end of the trench causes the Death Star to explode.

The higher levels incorporate a laser towers sequence: bonus points are awarded for destroying their peaks. Similarly, the difficulty and number of enemy shots against you increases, and the trench section is littered with obstacles.

Shields are lost on contact with any object, be it enemy fighters, missiles, gun emplacements or ground features; if a level is successfully completed, an extra shield is awarded. When all shields are lost, the game is over.



It's the nature of the game, but the Amiga graphics look just like the others

COMMENT

Apart from the sound, the Amiga version of the great arcade vector graphic classic is virtually identical to the ST. The sound is put to greater use, incorporating some powerfully explosive effects and gorgeous staccato laser fire. Speech is very clear and atmospheric (if moribund in parts) and includes some extra phrases; nonetheless, if anything the complete aural effect is less aesthetically pleasing, partly because the digitised interpretation of the Star Wars **theme is comically flat. Graphically, it's marginally more sluggish; but despite its visual simplicity the gameplay is extremely compelling because the action is non-stop. Long-term interest could wane because of this simple format, but until then it is as it should be, considering the machine's capabilities: a brilliant arcade conversion packed with furious blasting action.**

AMIGA
OVERALL 78%

PRESS ANY KEY

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

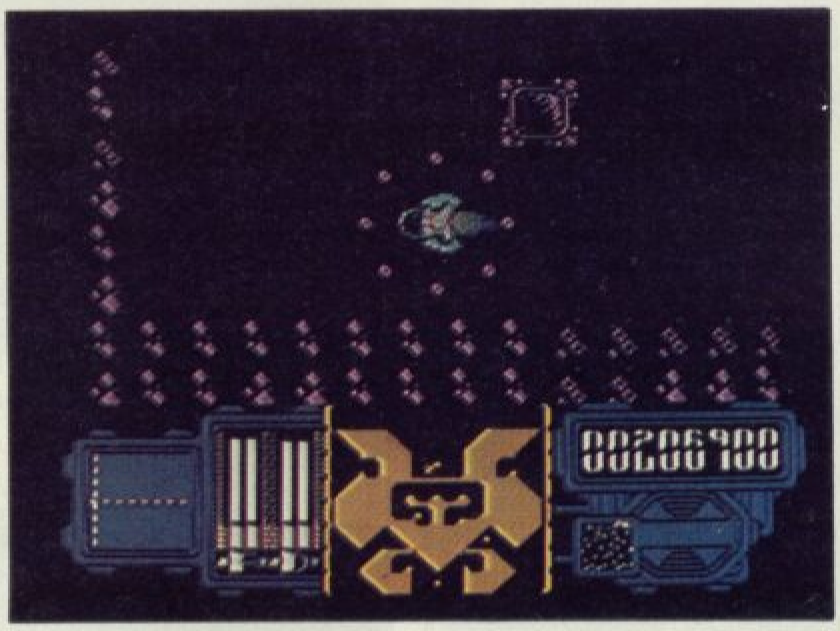
FIREFLY
Special FX/Ocean

Special FX was founded last year by former Ocean director **Paul Finnegan** together with **Jonathon Smith**, a long-time Ocean programmer. After a short spell with Liverpool-based Software Projects, for whom they wrote *Hysteria*, they've returned along the Manchester Ship Canal to old haunts at Ocean under their own label. *Firefly* is the first of a proposed six releases for this year.

For the crew of the Firefly there is no home – just Firefly itself. Their mission, under the player's control, is to destroy an army of mechanoids which has colonised a solar system. The system is displayed as a 9 x 5 grid of 45 segments. The objective is to get from the far left-hand side, where Firefly starts, to a switch situated on the far right-hand side.

Before the game starts some segments are already filled, while those which are just empty black spaces are parts of the solar system still under mechanoid control. There are always eight planet segments which cannot be occupied by the player and eight *gamble* segments. The latter consist of a vertical line of two thumbs-up signs and three thumbs-down along which the Firefly moves; pressing fire on a thumbs-up clears the segment allowing Firefly to progress, but a thumbs-down returns the player to the beginning to start the game again.

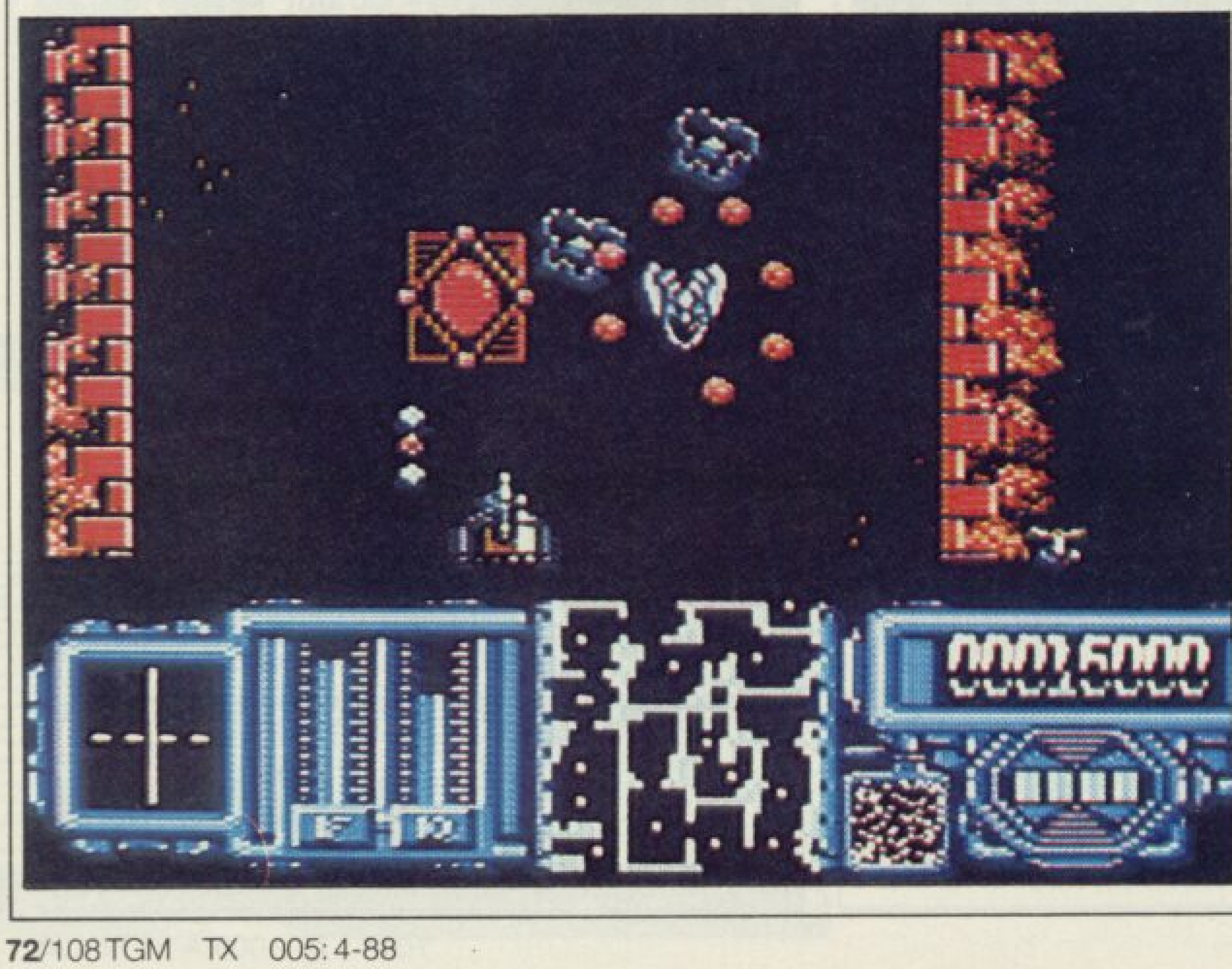
Segments with a circle (white on the Spectrum) are safe, allowing Firefly to cross them without gambling or entering into battle, which happens when an empty square is activated. Battles take place in a multi-directional scrolling sector of space which forms a maze inhabited by mechanoids. A sector is cleared by destroying the mechanoid generators, which show up on the scanner (middle bottom) as flashing dots.



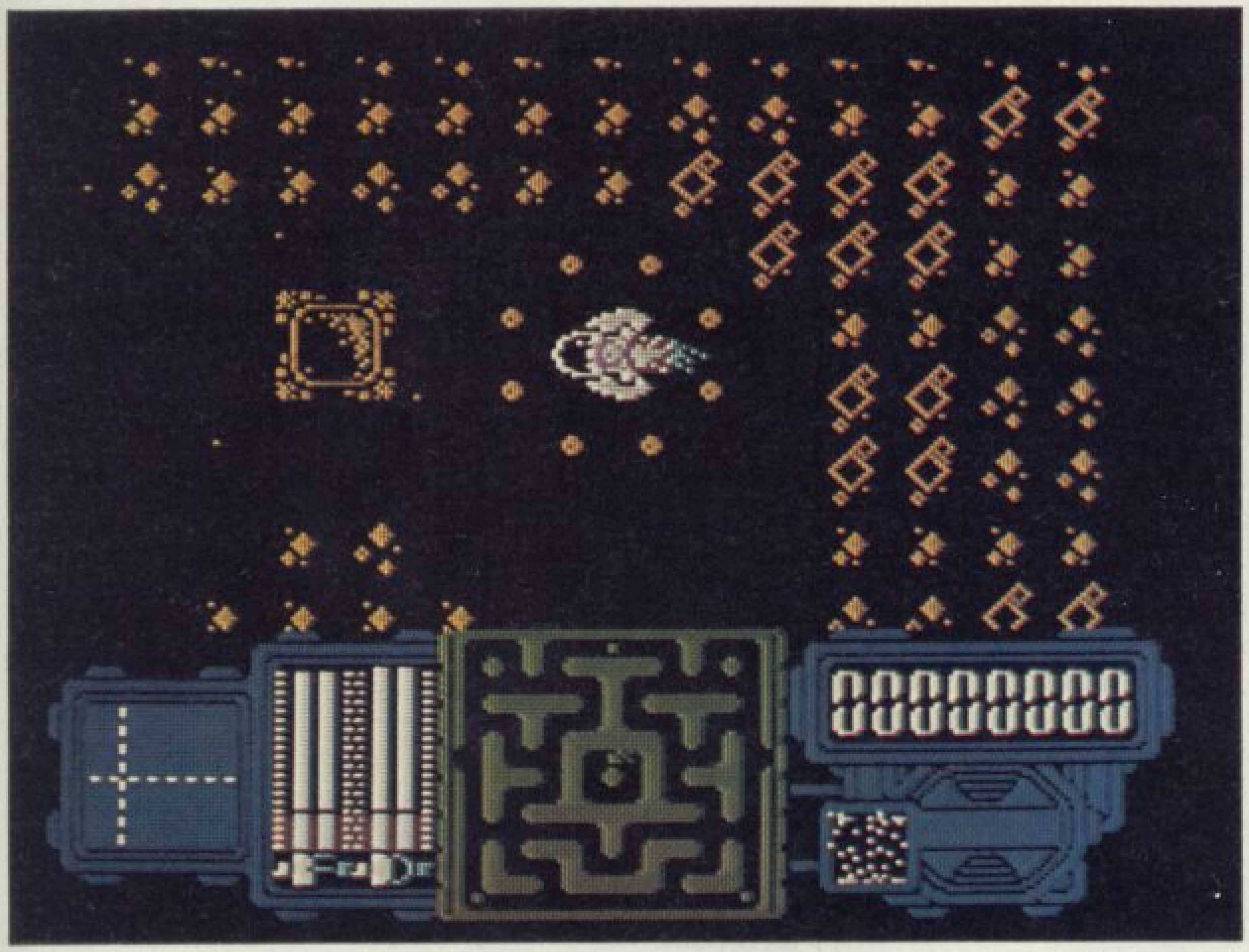
CRACKING YOKAS

Having located a generator Firefly must collect four amoeba-like forms called Yokas; the generator can then be entered and deactivated. Deactivation is achieved in a similar way to gambling; a thumbs-up and thumbs-down appear on screen flashing alternately – hitting fire when the thumbs-up is lit destroys the generator. Landing a thumbs-down means another four Yokas have to be collected before re-entering the generator for another try.

Continual bombardment from the mechanoid hordes drains the damage indicator, which, oddly, starts at full and empties out with





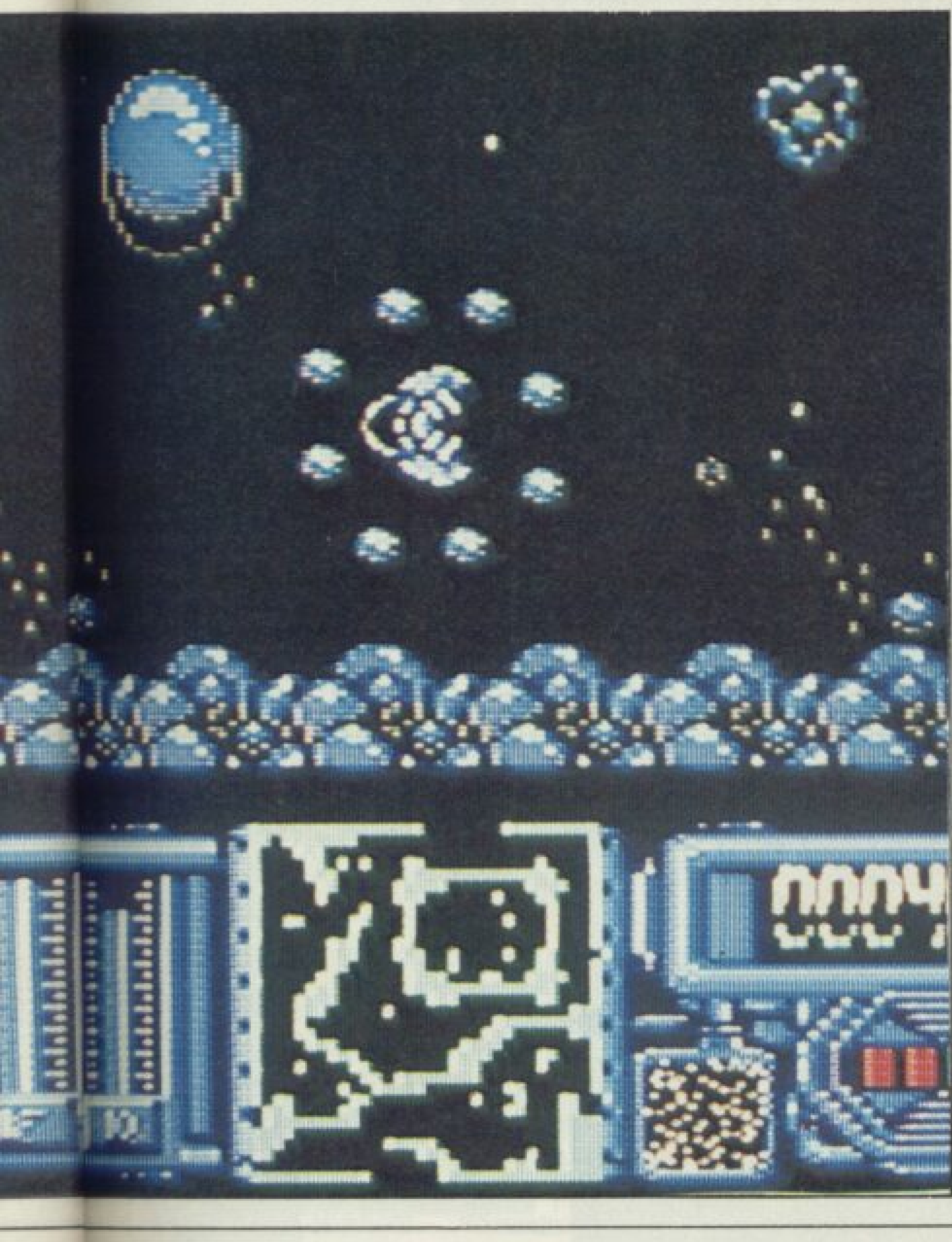


each hit, losing Firefly one of three lives when zero is reached. A life is also lost if the fuel runs out. However, running into an occasional space fish causes raindrops to fall, and for every drop collected damage is restored and fuel supply increased.

Some areas of the maze are sealed but may be reached through teleports. When a teleport area is accessed the screen displays a circle of red and blue (green on the Commodore) squares. To teleport successfully three blues are needed and are obtained by pressing fire as the cursor, which increases in speed gradually, makes its way around the circle.

Having destroyed all the generators the screen reverts to the grid map of the solar system where Firefly can activate another segment. This continues until the switch is reached or all three lives are lost.

Firefly is an impressive new label launch, and a highly addictive one due to the relentless compulsion to reach the switch. It is not unreasonably difficult once the gambling and battle sequences are mastered, but success largely depends on how well the grid is laid out at the beginning – it changes every time *Firefly* played – sometimes an easy route is provided, at other times it can prove downright impossible. But the random layout of the solar system gives *Firefly* a lot of variety so that it remains an incredibly playable and enjoyable game.



SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £7.95
Diskette: £14.95

The Spectrum version is highly playable because control is simple and movement is smooth, making objects easy to manipulate. Graphically it's magnificent; although the playing area is mainly monochromatic this doesn't spoil the effect at all. The scenery scrolls well as do the many mechanoids infesting the segments. A classy shoot-'em-up combined with elements of chance and the need for perfect timing makes Firefly **a great start to a new label.**

OVERALL 90%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95

Not quite as playable as its Spectrum counterpart, it is, however, significantly more challenging. The mazes are much more complex, so the route you take is going to involve more planning than in the Spectrum version. The graphics are effective, well defined and the imagery of the scrolling backdrops don't detract from the action itself. The Commodore version, naturally, is packed full of great sound FX and music, and what it loses in playability it certainly gains in presentation.

OVERALL 90%

OTHER VERSIONS

This seems to be it for the time being, but Ocean may well want to consider some other format releases before long.

"Firefly **is an impressive new label launch, and a highly addictive one . . .** "

PRESS ANY KEY

DUTCH COURAGE



Disappointingly, only a simplistic shoot-'em-up, on the Spectrum the lack of colour is a disadvantage to Arnie's brave efforts

PREDATOR
Activision

It is a shame that everyone under 18 won't have seen the film of *Predator*, the blockbuster, all-action, box-office hit movie starring Arnold (*The Terminator*, *Commando*) Schwarzenegger – and of course, caring parents won't let you see it when it comes out on video either, unless you have turned 18 in the meantime. So for the underprivileged underagers, the next best thing is to play the computer game, which Activision has kindly prepared for you. The storyboard was designed by **System 3** (*Bangkok Knights*, *The Last Ninja* and *IK* series) with coding, music and graphics by **Source Software**. For the 64 version, **Hugh Riley** provided the graphics.

You take the role of Major Alan 'Dutch' Schaefer, the leader of a crack combat team sent in on a top secret mission to rescue white-collar survivors of a helicopter crash deep behind enemy lines. The team finds the survivors murdered by guerillas, and following a fire fight with the guerillas at their base, the team is forced to retreat back into the jungle. Then, one by one, each member is killed by a new threat, an alien predator from another world. Extremely agile, the alien is seemingly invulnerable to the most powerful of firepower.

Predator is a powerful movie and it is difficult to see how any computer game could capture the suspense and excessive violence that has made the film such a success. Almost predictably, the basic idea behind the game is nothing new, which may disappoint some readers who have seen the film, but System 3 have managed remarkably well to capture the film's flavour, and for once, stick quite well to the plot.

The game begins with the team leaving their helicopter, running into the jungle with the Dutch providing the rearguard in what quickly becomes a battle for survival. The game takes the player through the film's main scenes, from the jungle itself to the guerilla base, on over trees spanning chasms and mud pools and on to the final encounter with the predator itself, all by way of scrolling landscapes. This is done, in all versions, by the use of multi-loads, so if you are not on disk, be prepared for a wait between sections.

At the outset, Dutch is armed with a machine-gun and three grenades, and as the jungle is overflowing with guerillas, enemy soldiers, low flying vultures and the predator itself, there is no shortage of targets.

BODY SNATCHER

At each stage mutilated bodies of Dutch's team lie strewn around the jungle clearings. Searching their corpses reveals extra weapons and ammunition for use against the enemy. Dutch can be wounded by enemy bullets, machine-gun fire, or claw wounds from passing vultures. As he is, however, made of sterner stuff, he can take several wounds before losing a life.

Frequently the predator's gunsight tracks in on Dutch as he runs through the jungle, and a life is lost if it catches up with him. In the final two levels the predator itself joins in the action, using all of its skills to try and kill Dutch. The whole mission is played against the clock – a timer attached to a nuclear device primed to explode.

As is often the case with film tie-ins, the computer version is better appreciated after seeing the film – the instructions do not go into much detail about the game's objectives, so if you have not seen the film first, you may find some of it bewildering. Though we have seen game scenarios like this one done in countless forms before, from the opening sequence onwards – as Earth looms into view – the game is very professional looking, and, depending on which format you have, can be effectively atmospheric. It is only the limited gameplay of each level that makes *Predator* something of a let down, although despite this, it manages to be a very enjoyable shoot-'em-up.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.99

It's such a pity that much of the film's atmosphere isn't given proper justice in the green and black scrolling levels of the Spectrum. The background scenes of jungle foliage look very impressive, but they tend to obscure soldiers, vultures and bullets moving around the screen, spoiling playability. Arnie himself is neatly animated, strides along purposefully and really looks as though he's firing a powerful gun, but the predatory alien looks decidedly average for such an awesome beast. Don't worry too much about the multi-loads as they are only about 30 seconds long.

OVERALL 70%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Colour and animation really come into their own on the Commodore version. Jungle details are superb and the Arnie character works particularly well, right down to changing facial expressions. Colour is used well, not only to convey atmosphere, but practically too when you are targetted by the alien. Sound FX add to the whole with twittering birds in the background and a suitable gurgling noise as the alien in hiding watches you. Best of the three versions, Predator **is a creditable film licence, and an interesting reworking of the scrolling shoot-'em-up.**

OVERALL 84%

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

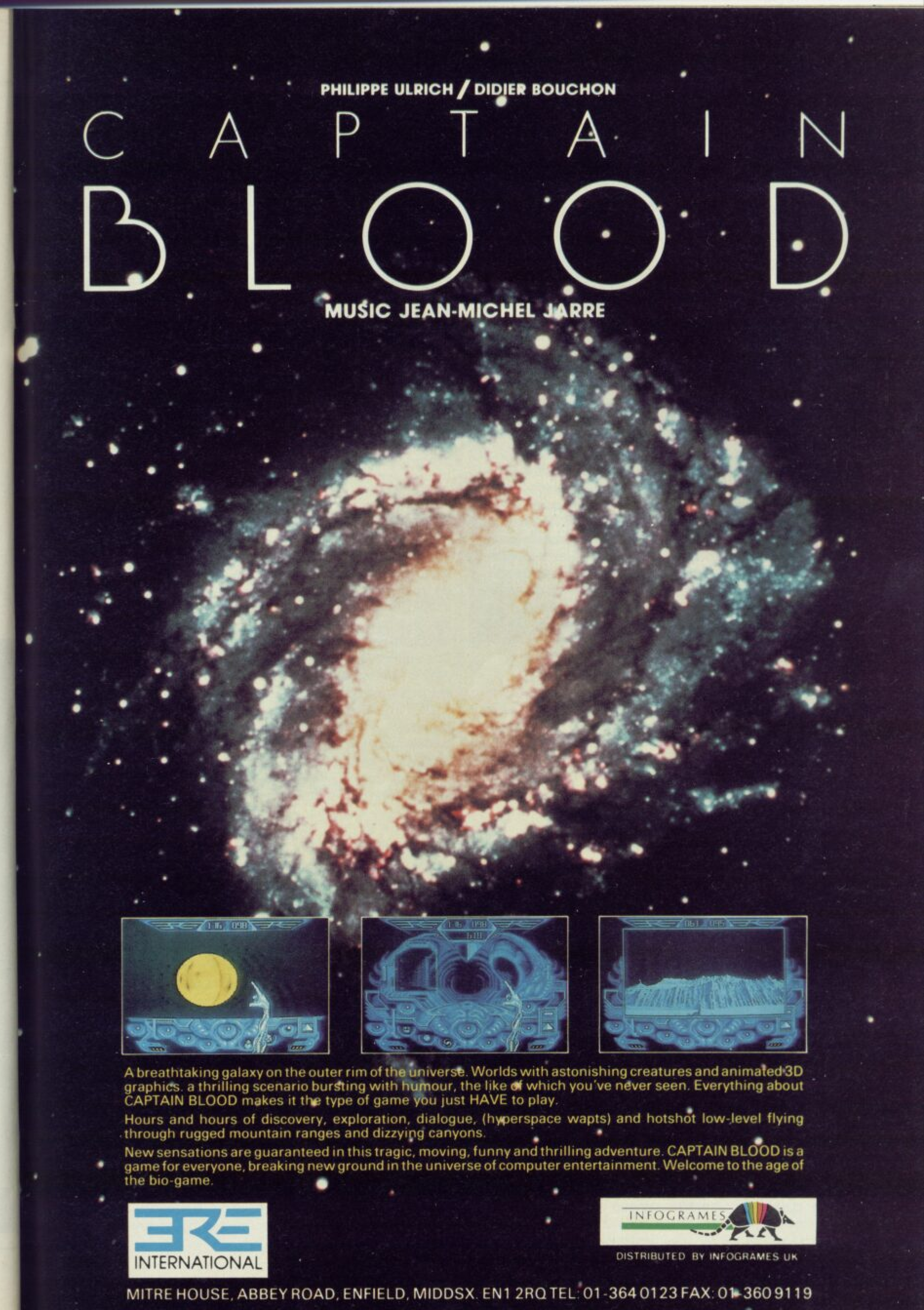
Colour has been put to good use in Predator**. The dark browns and greens work well to recreate the film's atmosphere effectively. The scrolling is a little rough around the edges and the background graphics, (like the Spectrum version), tend to obscure enemy bullets and the alien gunsight, but the game itself is polished in the way it is put together. Surprisingly, sound FX do not play a prominent part, they are restricted to gun fire, the approach of the alien's gunsight and the infrequent caw of vultures.**

OVERALL 76%

" . . . from the opening sequence, the game is professional and atmospheric."

The colourful Amstrad graphics help lift the game's feel, but it still remains too basic to really thrill




PHILIPPE ULRICH / DIDIER BOUCHON
CAPTAIN
BLOOD
MUSIC JEAN-MICHEL JARRE
A breathtaking galaxy on the outer rim of the universe. Worlds with astonishing creatures and animated 3D graphics. a thrilling scenario bursting with humour, the like of which you've never seen. Everything about CAPTAIN BLOOD makes it the type of game you just HAVE to play.
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U.S. GOLD

NATIONAL COMPUTER G

Organised by Newsfield Publications Limited on behalf of US Gold, tNa

BIG PRIZES AND THE CHANCE TO COMPETE IN THE FINALS AT THE PE

NEWSFIELD PUBLICATIONS is proud to announce the first ever British National Computer Games Championships open to all-comers. Six regional heats with contestants competing in two categories – Spectrum and Commodore 64/128 – will be followed by two semi-finals with the qualifying contestants going forward to compete against each other on a stand built specially for the finals at the new PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW (formerly The Personal Computer World Show) at London's Earls Court. By filling out the entry form on these pages you could be among the 324 first-round contestants selected to play arcade games provided by competition sponsors US GOLD and put yourself on the road to fame and a big prize worth £1,000.

From May 14, a custom-designed travelling roadshow will take banks of Spectrum and Commodore computers to selected boys' clubs in six locations around Great Britain for the regional heats. The qualifying competitors will aim to raise the highest scores playing games specially selected from among the latest US Gold releases.

The event – the first of its kind – is being organised by Newsfield's magazines CRASH, ZZAP! 64 and THE GAMES MACHINE. US Gold, market leaders in computer software, are sponsoring the whole competition and providing all the prizes. The National Association of Boys' Clubs, with over 2,000 affiliated clubs 200,000 members throughout the UK, is helping to promote this exciting championship as well as providing venues for the regional heats and the semi-finals.

So what do you need to do to get yourself selected for the competition that could prove you to be Britain's best arcade game high-scorer? For a start off you don't have to be a Spectrum or Commodore owner, but to have a chance of qualifying you will need to be able to achieve the best possible scores on the listed games in the coupon – and remember, if you do qualify, not only you will be playing in public but also in front of the British press, so cheating now on the entry form will not stand you in good stead later!

HOW THE CHAMPIONSHIP WILL RUN

Six towns throughout the UK have been chosen for the regional heats, so there should be a venue not too far from you (see the separate list). The National Association of Boys' Clubs is already running a qualifying competition among its own membership, and they will be supplying three Spectrum and three Commodore entrants to each of the regional heats. We will be selecting a further 27 Spectrum and 27 Commodore entrants, from the forms you send in, to attend each of the regional heats. This means that in the first round a total of 360 contestants will fight to go through to the semi-finals. The five best high scorers in each format per regional heat will qualify for the semi-finals, making a total of 60 contestants. And from there, the three top scorers in each format will go through to the prestigious finals to be held at the Earls Court Personal Computer Show.

THE PRIZES

Apart from the thrill of displaying your joystick prowess to the world at large, there are some exciting prizes and mementoes to be won. Every qualified entrant will receive a specially designed certificate scroll to prove that they are at least considered among the 360 best arcade games players in the country. Special medals have been struck bearing the National Computer Games Championship logo on one side and the Boys' Club logo and year on the reverse; the 60 semi-finalists will each receive a bronze version of the medallion, while those who qualify for the finals will receive a silver medal. For the two outright winners, one on the Spectrum and one on the Commodore, there will be gold medals mounted in wooden display plaques.

US Gold are providing a mixture of hardware and software prizes for both winners to the value of £1,000, with valuable runner-up prizes for other finalists. On top of that, there will be free software and other gifts for finalists and semi-finalists and the chance to meet several famous personalities who will be attending the events. But perhaps the most thrilling aspect will be the chance to prove yourself the very best British computer games player in front of the vast audience attending the Personal Computer Show. And of course you will be featured in Newsfield's magazines as such.

COMPETITION RULES, ENTRY DETAILS AND VENUE DATES

The six regional heats, each comprising 30 Spectrum and 30 Commodore contestants drawn from the National Association of Boys' Clubs (three per machine) and from Newsfield magazines' entry forms will take place in the following towns:

May 14 - **Birmingham**
May 21 - **Gloucester**
May 28 - **Belfast**
June 4 - **Edinburgh**
June 11 - **Leeds**
June 18 - **London**

All days are Saturdays. Heats will be held in the mornings. The towns listed are correct at time of going to press, but the organisers reserve the right to make last-minute alterations. Qualifying entrants will be informed of necessary attendance details in good time.

BOYS' CLUBS

BOYS' CLUBS

GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS

, th National Association of Boys' Clubs & the Personal Computer Show

ERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW AT EARLS COURT SEPTEMBER 16-18 1988

The semi-finals will be held in Leeds on August 16, and in London on August 18; finals at the Personal Computer Show over the three public days, September 16-18.

Friends and relatives wishing to attend the first round and semi-finals will be welcome, but the NABC will be making a very modest entry charge to non-contestants. Readers wishing to attend will also be welcome – details will be published in future issues, or you can ring the organisers' office for details no sooner than one week before these dates.

If you wish to put your name forward to qualify for Britain's first National Computer Games Championship, fill out the form as soon as possible and send it to the listed address. The high scores you give will be checked by experts both at Newsfield and at US Gold. Entrants under 18 must ensure their form is countersigned by a parent or legal guardian. All qualifying entrants must be prepared to attend the venues they select on the due dates. You may select to enter at any one of the above listed venues. The organisers will accept no claims for travel or subsistence expenses for contestants in the regional heats. All contestants qualifying for the semi-finals can claim up to a maximum of £10 for travelling expenses and will receive free software from US Gold. Finalists will be given a free weekend at the Personal Computer Show in London. During contests, the decision of the appointed judges and stewards will be final and no correspondence concerning administration can be entered into.

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TGM

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Please tick the regional heat venue you would like to attend

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In order to help us determine whether you should qualify to enter, please give your high scores on **two** of the following five US Gold Games:

OUTRUN high score is: ....

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720° high score is: ....

GAUNTLET II high score is: ....

RYGAR high score is: ....

And your best score on two of your favourite arcade coin-op machines:

1 Coin-op name is: .... high score is ....

2 Coin-op name is: .... high score is ....

Complete the form and send it to **THE ORGANISER, NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPIONSHIP, NEWSFIELD LIMITED, PO BOX 20, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.** Successful applicants will be contacted in plenty of time. Please do not ring or write to ask, it only blocks up the phone lines! And good luck!

INFORMATION DESK

Information Desk is a new monthly column devoted to answering your queries concerning the world of computers and electronic entertainment. We will do our best to answer your questions, but if we can't (even almighty oracles don't know everything) we will put the question to you, the readers.

First off, M Westwood **of Barnsley, South Yorkshire, is enquiring about Nintendo's new machine, the PC Engine (as featured in the extensive Ultimate/Rare interview in TGM004).**

1. Is the PC Engine an entirely new machine or a hardware add-on/extra for the existing Nintendo range?

The machine is a complete system in itself and is fully compatible with all existing Nintendo cartridge software.

2. How does it compare with the ST or Amiga? Is it worth waiting for the PC Engine?

From what we already know, the machine represents a considerable advance over the existing UK Nintendo system and, like most consoles, would probably be best suited as a complementary system to a home computer (whether Amiga or ST). As to whether it's worth waiting for, it's too early to say for definite as the machine might not be released at all in the UK (or Europe for that matter).

Moving on, Commodore 64 owner and potential Amiga purchaser, Mark Healy of Enfield, Middlesex, has written asking about Amiga monitors, the Xerox 4020 printer and a Panasonic video camera.

1. As I need very clear output, which monitor would be my best choice out of the Commodore 1801, the new 1084 or one from the Phillips range?

Phillips are particularly good at producing high quality monitors at reasonable prices and the 8833/8852 series monitors are worth a look. If however, you've got a little extra cash then consider the 1804 or the Amiga 1901C – dedicated monitors are safe bets and save a lot on time and installation. Incidentally, THE GAMES MACHINE's monitor is the standard Amiga 1801, so take a look at the Amiga screen shots in this issue if you want to judge for yourself.

2. Can the Xerox 4020 Colour Printer (or another of equal quality) be printed to directly within software?

Afraid we can't help you there Mark, but most art packages and word processors have printer drivers which can be redefined and customised to suit the user, so you shouldn't have a problem with the Xerox. Perhaps an Amiga/Xerox owning reader out there can help.

3. Where can I obtain a Panasonic WV-1410 black and white video camera from, and what price would it be?

"Is the PC Engine an entirely new machine?"

"Where can I obtain a Panasonic WV-1410 b/w video camera?"



Your local dealers may be able to help you Mark. In the Middlesex area, try Andromeda at *34 Rockingham Rd, Uxbridge.* Alternatively get in touch with Shorrock's Security at *Unit 2F, Goddington Way Industrial Estate, Ashford* (0233-22466), otherwise contact Panasonic themselves at Panasonic (UK), *280-290 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 6JG.* (0753-73181). The camera itself is priced at a modest £179.00.

The final letter in this month's Information Desk comes from Stephen Brook **of Yeovil, Somerset, whose father has just bought an Amstrad PCW 9512.**

1. I'm particularly interested in simulations of aircraft and helicopters; could you please tell me if any are available for the 9512?

As far as we know, *Tomahawk* by Digital Integration priced at £19.95 is the only simulator on the PCW to date, with nothing else in the pipeline. Unfortunately, MicroProse, one of the leading software companies producing simulations, have no plans to produce software for the PCW series. Contact Digital Integration on 0276-684959 or write to them at: *Watchmoor Trade Centre, Watchmoor Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3AJ.*

2. Could I use disk software from the Amstrad CPC or other PCW's?

Sorry Stephen, but CPC software won't run on the PCW, period. You shouldn't have any problems with software from other PCW machines though. Unless any PCW owning readers know different!

And that's it for this first appearance of The Information Desk. The Desk is open for business every month so if you've got any sensible answers to questions posed, hints, tips and cheats for the latest computer games or any questions, suggestions, grievances, general queries about computers and electronic entertainment, drop us a line at INFORMATION DESK, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB.* On-line readers can MBX us by using our I-D (TGM).


THE HEAT'S ON IN SKATE CITY
PRO STAR
Screen shots from arcade version.
• "Those who like their action fast and furious should enjoy 720°" ZZAP 64!
• "A faithful and enjoyable conversion" ZZAP 64!
• "One of USG's best conversions to date" COMMODORE USER
• "For my money this is not just as playable as the coin-op it is infact much more playable" COMMODORE USER
• "Fans of the arcade original and novices alike should love this playable and addictive game – one of the most original to emerge this year" GAMES MACHINE
• "U.S. Gold has set a superb standard" CRASH
• "720° is the epitome of a classic. Its got every element of a great game" SINCLAIR USER
• "Did we flip over it? You bet!" SINCLAIR USER (Nominated a Sinclair User Classic)
• "Virtually flawless arcade game. Addictive smooth and slick, easily U.S. Gold's finest hour. Don't miss this one" SINCLAIR USER (Nominated a Sinclair User Classic)
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ROB STEEL'S GETTING ADVENTUROUS

LEISURE SUIT LARRY

Sierra On-line Inc
ATARI ST Diskette: £19.99
AMIGA Diskette: £19.99
PC Diskette: £19.99

Authors of the very playable *King's Quest* series, **Al Lowe** and **Mark Crowe**, have once again joined forces to produce another 3-D animated adventure for your delight and delectation. *Leisure Suit Larry In The Land Of The Lounge Lizards* is the latest offering from Sierra On-Line Inc.

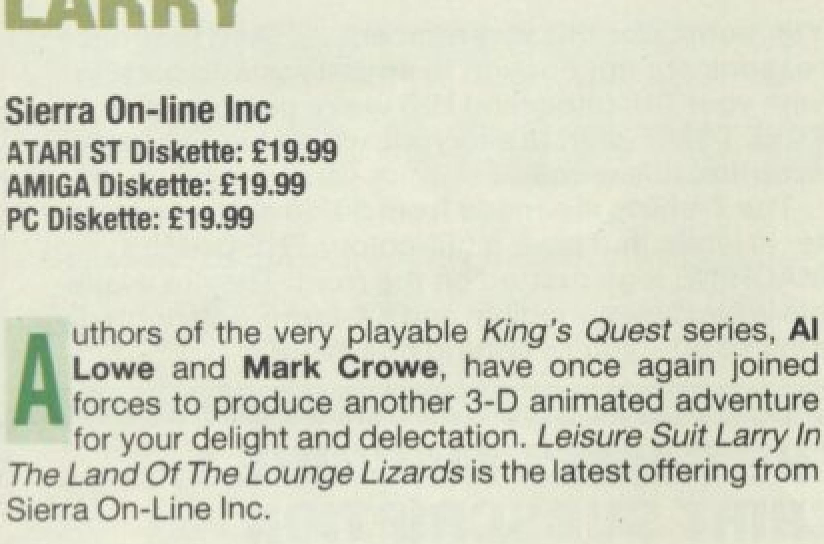


Leisure Suit Larry **on the ST – a game unsuitable for players under the age of 18 (no looking at the pictures either)!**

Larry is a jerk! The wrong side of 40, he has realised life is passing him by. A final walk on the wild side is what he needs before it is too late. His existence to date has hardly been a flurry of excitement, living with his mother until the age of 38, when she threw him out, he has led a very sheltered life, which, in this context, may be read as 'still a virgin'.

Under your guidance he has one night to overcome his 'jerkisms' and lose his virginity. *Leisure Suit Larry* contains some explicit scenes and language, therefore it is unsuitable for players under age 18.

You begin your quest outside Lefty's bar, armed with a watch, money, breath spray and dressed in his highest quality, 100% man-made, permanent-press suit. There is a Taxi rank in this location, although a trip into the bar is required before Larry can hit the outside the toilet may not look like it, but he needs you to get him a drink. Fulfilling this dubiously friendly act will reward you with a TV remote control unit. This may seem obscure at first (even remote?), but who knows what one may find in the pockets of a drunk, and the unit's function is town proper. The drunk found obvious and soon required.



You can sit down at the bar and get blown out of your brain if that's what takes your fancy, although this will only hamper game progress and, as in real life, is pointless (but sometimes a necessity). You can play the jukebox, talk to the other people in the bar and even chat up the one and only girl there. However, the main purpose inside Lefty's is to find the password to the locked door, get past the pimp and, refraining from indulging in what might (to some) come naturally with the whore – VD is rife in these circles – steal her chocolates and escape.

Suitably armed with all the cliché gifts that girls are supposed to like; chocolates, flowers and a ring, you may now head for the Casino to try and make your fortune (girls like money too!). The gambling – be it Blackjack or the slot machines – is very realistic . . . I kept losing. Three of THE GAMES MACHINE reviewers were seated around the Atari ST for the duration of an afternoon, biting our nails in trepidation as the dealer dealt hands designed to keep us on the edge of our seats. Thankfully the gambling elements in *Leisure Suit Larry* by no means detract from the adventure, they simply add to an already very enjoyable game.

DISCOS HERE AN' DISCOS THERE

Control of Larry's movement as he jerks his way around the many screens is via keyboard, joystick or mouse, with actions such as EXAMINE and TALK TO carried out using text input. The parser is more than adequate to deal with almost anything logical you may wish to input. The graphics themselves are fairly blocky although colourful and often amusing. The sound is basic to such an extent that I wonder why they bothered at all, and gamespeed can be a little slow, accessing the disk for each location visited. However, some of the situations Larry finds himself in (his Disco dancing makes John Travolta look like Patrick Moore doing the Mashed Potato) and the interaction with other characters is often hilarious. The quest to lose Larry's virginity, without catching anything unspeakable, is an entertaining one, wholeheartedly sexist, but nonetheless a jolly good romp (can I say that?).

ATMOSPHERE 78%
INTERACTION 84%
OVERALL 83%

CRASH GARRETT

Infogrames
ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95
PC Diskette: £19.95
AMIGA Diskette: £19.95

The year is 1938 and Crash Garrett, once a full time adventurer and ace pilot, has decided to settle down to a quieter life-style. No more derring-do escapades for Crash, he has found the girl of his dreams and is putting the days of bootlegging, gun running and gang wars behind him; Crash Garrett has gone legit. The events in *Crash Garrett* the adventure take place over a two-day period in the year 1938, Garrett is taking Cynthia Sleeze, the famous gossip columnist, to the town of Lone Pine, where she hopes to interview top film star Shucks Shottaway. The game opens onboard Crash's plane in mid-flight; Cynthia looks more than a little worried . . .

Upon loading the first disk you are presented with a very scratchy, none-too musical rendition of what I presume to be a typical 1930s tune. Thankfully this theme can be avoided with the stab of a key and the game proper begun.



An adventure that tends to play with itself rather than with Cynthia Sleeze

The screen layout of five windows and all graphics therein are effectively implemented. The primary window is taken up with Crash's immediate area or the current event taking place, and any characters present are depicted graphically, complete with fitting expressions and speech bubbles. Top left of the screen is a window to show a reservoir of super power available to Crash, which asset gives our hero extra strength – however, the doses are limited to only eight per game and must be used wisely. To the right of this is the location/ offers no reason why. The cracked stone vase on the well lid is particularly annoying. It rests on the metal lid covering the well just waiting to be manoeuvred, but can you get it, examine it, move it, look inside it or anything else remotely logical? No you can't! The vase just sits there being infuriating, with no reason given as to why interaction with it seems impossible. This predicament arises with many situations and objects throughout the game and eventually becomes tiresome.

Crash Garrett is an adventure which has a tendency to play with itself. The story unfolds without much interaction from you until the going gets tough. As soon as Crash gets into a pickle the game very kindly allows you to take the reins and attempt to get out of the situation. If you haven't been paying attention you may find yourself in deep trouble. *Crash Garrett* is interesting to play for an hour or so but the novelty soon wears off, as brick wall after brick wall is encountered and progress hampered for the umpteenth time. This is a shame as the game appeared to have great potential from the early sequences, however, for those of you who are willing to fight every inch of the way it may hold some interest.

LACK OF INTERACTION

Crash Garrett is tough. It comes with a very slim instruction booklet which gives little idea of how the game works and therefore leaves you floundering as you struggle to understand the adventure's idiosyncrasies. Many a time I found myself flying off to some airstrip or another due to innocently inputting CLIMB INTO PLANE or GO UP. Many frustrations await the player as the game is unwilling to allow the usual adventure options to be used, and event description in text. The primary window is below this, with the inventory window at the far right. And at the bottom there is a single line for your text input.

ATMOSPHERE 58%
INTERACTION 47%
OVERALL 52%

BEYOND ZORK

Infocom
ATARI ST Diskette: £29.99
AMIGA Diskette: £29.99
PC Diskette: £29.99
COMMODORE 128 Diskette: £24.99

The success of the *Zork* Trilogy is renowned throughout the adventuring world; selling nearly three million copies, it is one of the most popular entertainment software products ever. Infocom has decided to cash in on this success and recreate the Zorkian universe, and in so doing make it 'bigger and better' than before. *Beyond Zork* combines the puzzles and prose that have become Infocom's trademark with the combat and character building elements of role-playing games.



It is a dark time for the Kingdom of Quendor, the Wizards have all disappeared, the Enchanters' Guild is in ruins and the villages lie abandoned. The streets and wastelands of Quendor are haunted by vicious monsters and, because you have loaded up the

game, it is up to you to unravel the meaning behind these ominous events.

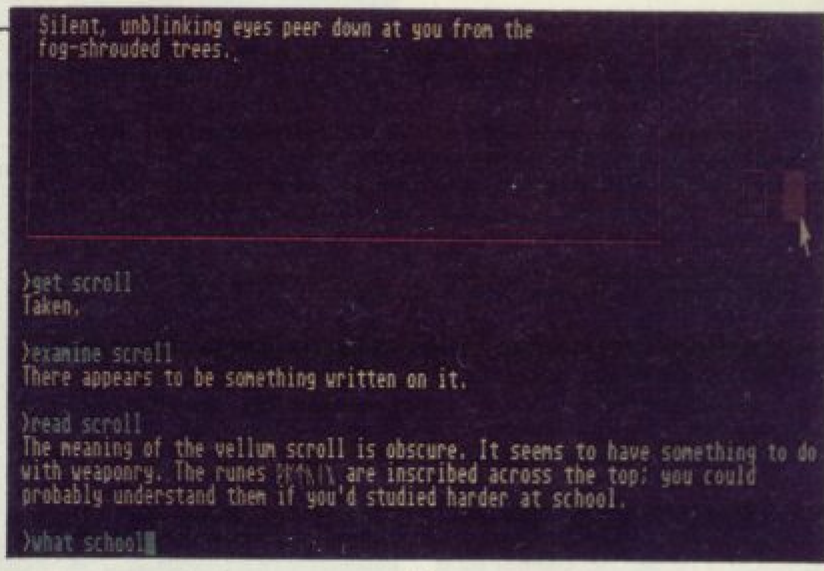
The first surprise in *Beyond Zork* is the existence of a very attractive title screen; unusual for Infocom, it depicts the sun rising behind a brick monument of the name Zork. Once loaded there are many more changes to familiarise yourself with. The screen display is defaulted to show a window, top left, which either offers location descriptions, your character's possessions or attributes. Right of this is an updating-map feature showing the immediate surrounding area plus exits from the current location. The bottom of the screen allows for text input and event descriptions. Should this new format not appeal to hardened Infocom fans, the 'old ways' can be called up by inputting the Mode command to change the screen to Infocom's more standard game.

In fact *Beyond Zork* includes a number of useful commands; Colour changes on-screen colours; Name allows you to rename objects and characters; Undo takes you one step back should a wrong move be made (not on the Commodore 128 though). The power of the Infocom parser does not suffer from these extras, and the text descriptions are as screen-filling as ever.

ROLE'S CHOICE

Once you are used to the strange new layout, the enhancements therein actually add to the gameplay. You may either play a preset character or create one of your own and decide the characteristics – strength, luck etc – yourself. The scenario is a little strange – subtitled *The Coconut Of Quendor* – and is full of unusual creatures all of whom seem bent on your destruction.

Movement around the land is fairly easy at first, although there are many deaths awaiting the unwary adventurer. One small drawback: the fact that you have a table of characteristics requiring constant vigilance keeps pulling you back from this land of magic



and mystery to something more akin to the real world. It is hard to stay mentally in Quendor when a bar chart has to be carefully monitored to ensure survival. Having said that, I like this new style of game, the changes made to the Infocom format are neat and work very well. The inclusion of the role-playing elements add just a little more spice to the standard text adventure, and with that extra sprinkling of realism,Infocom are really cooking.

ATMOSPHERE 85%
INTERACTION 89%
OVERALL 87%

WOLFMAN

CRL
COMMODORE 64 Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Rod Pike has been one of my favourite adventure authors since the days of *Pilgrim*, and as I find lycanthropy a most interesting subject, you may well imagine the slavering interest with which I loaded his latest offering. This adventure comes in three parts, during which you get the chance to play both the haunted anti-hero of the title and the light of his life, the beautiful Nadia.

Part one concerns the dawning realisation by the main character that he is a werewolf. He wakes one morning with blood on his hands, ripped clothes and memories of a horrific night of mayhem and death. As the full horror of his situation becomes plain, the man decides to fight his affliction. He sets off on a trail of learning, during which he must resist the awful temptations of the flesh he encounters, or be forever cursed and lose the love of Nadia.

Part two, set in the mountains, is interesting in that you get to play the part of Nadia as she falls for the Wolfman and takes him home to . . . er . . . make friends. She knows his dread secret and must be very careful not to allow the beast within the man to emerge . . . if you see what I mean. Unfortunately Nadia is kidnapped by wolf hunters and, obsessed with revenge, the Wolfman vows to find and rescue the girl.

Part three is entitled *The Monastery Of Fi Shan* and concerns the tracking of the hunters and the ultimate discovery of a monastery which may hold the answer to the Werewolf's curse.

THE CRYPT FACTOR

Mr Pike uses his obvious writing talents to create a suitably moody atmosphere throughout *Wolfman.* However, there are one or two glitches within the program which should have been ironed out before the game was released. Inside the tiny Crypt there is a book safely locked within a glass-panelled display case, inputting GET BOOK results in the answer YOU CANNOT SEE THAT. Can't Werewolves see through glass? Also once the book is safely in your hairy hand if you EXAMINE CASE you find that the book is still inside it! Very lax. These lapses of attention to detail occur in the first few locations of part one, hopefully they are not a precedent for the rest of the game.

Due to tight deadlines and the urge to include *Wolfman* in this issue I did not have time to get as far into the adventure as I would have liked. However, what little I did see was not quite up to the standard of Rod's previous work and although there was plenty of text to ingest, the instant magic of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* was just not present. Having said that, *Wolfman* is still a lot better than most utility-written adventures and the three parts make it good value for money.

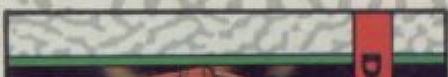
There are to be two versions released for each format, one with static graphics which does not require a board of censorship certificate, despite its gruesome pictures, and an animated version which, due to the video censorship laws does. The certificate awarded is 18.

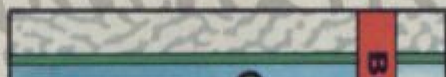
ATMOSPHERE 69%
INTERACTION 61%
OVERALL 66%

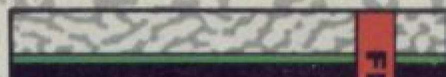
It's okay if they're still, but if they move, you have got to be over 18 to see them – a yukky screen shot of someone who met the **Wolfman** *– Commodore 64 screen*

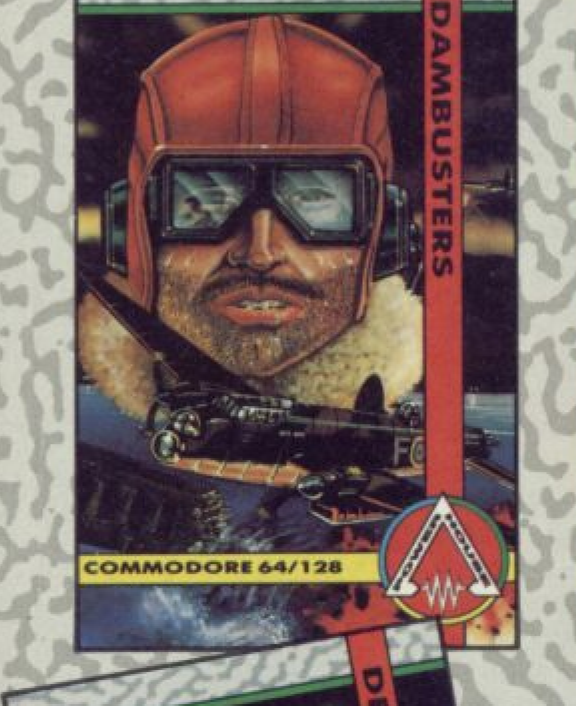


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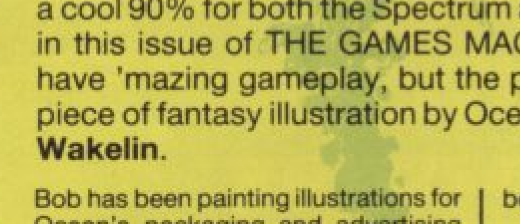
AND WIN BOB WAKELIN'S ORIGINAL FIREFLY ARTWORK

25 copies of FIREFLY for runners up!

FIREFLY **is a shining example of the power of 8-bit to run top-notch games. Special FX/Ocean are the combined forces behind *Firefly*, the masterpiece of arcade mayhem that scored a cool 90% for both the Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions in this issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. And not only does it have 'mazing gameplay, but the packaging artwork is another piece of fantasy illustration by Ocean's most famous artist, Bob Wakelin.**

Bob has been painting illustrations for Ocean's packaging and advertising ever since the company's birth, and although he does lots of other work as well, he has managed to illustrate nearly every game Ocean has published. Now here's your chance to own an ORIGINAL Wakelin, and start that collection which one day you will leave to the nation in your bequest. If you are the winner of this competition, the painting he did for *Firelfly*, signed by Bob and the Special FX team, is yours, plus a copy of the game. But if you are a touch less lucky, there's still a chance to a win a copy of *Firefly* for either the Spectrum or Commodore, because we've got 25 to give away.

To be in with a chance you're going to have to cast your eyes back over the review. Below are seven lines taken from the review with words missing (**?** means one letter). Find the missing words and fit them into the puzzle around the letters of **FIREFLY**. First correct entry out of the bag wins the painting. Solve the puzzle, fill out the coupon and send it to: **FIREFLY COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than April 21. Our usual competition rules apply – see the masthead for details.



. . . It's not unreasonably **?????????** once the . . .

. . . pressing fire on a thumbs up **??????** the segment . . .

. . . is restored and **????** supply is increased . . .

. . . fish cause raindrops to **????** . . .

. . . former Ocean Director Paul **???????** together . . .

. . . destroying the **?????????** generators . . .

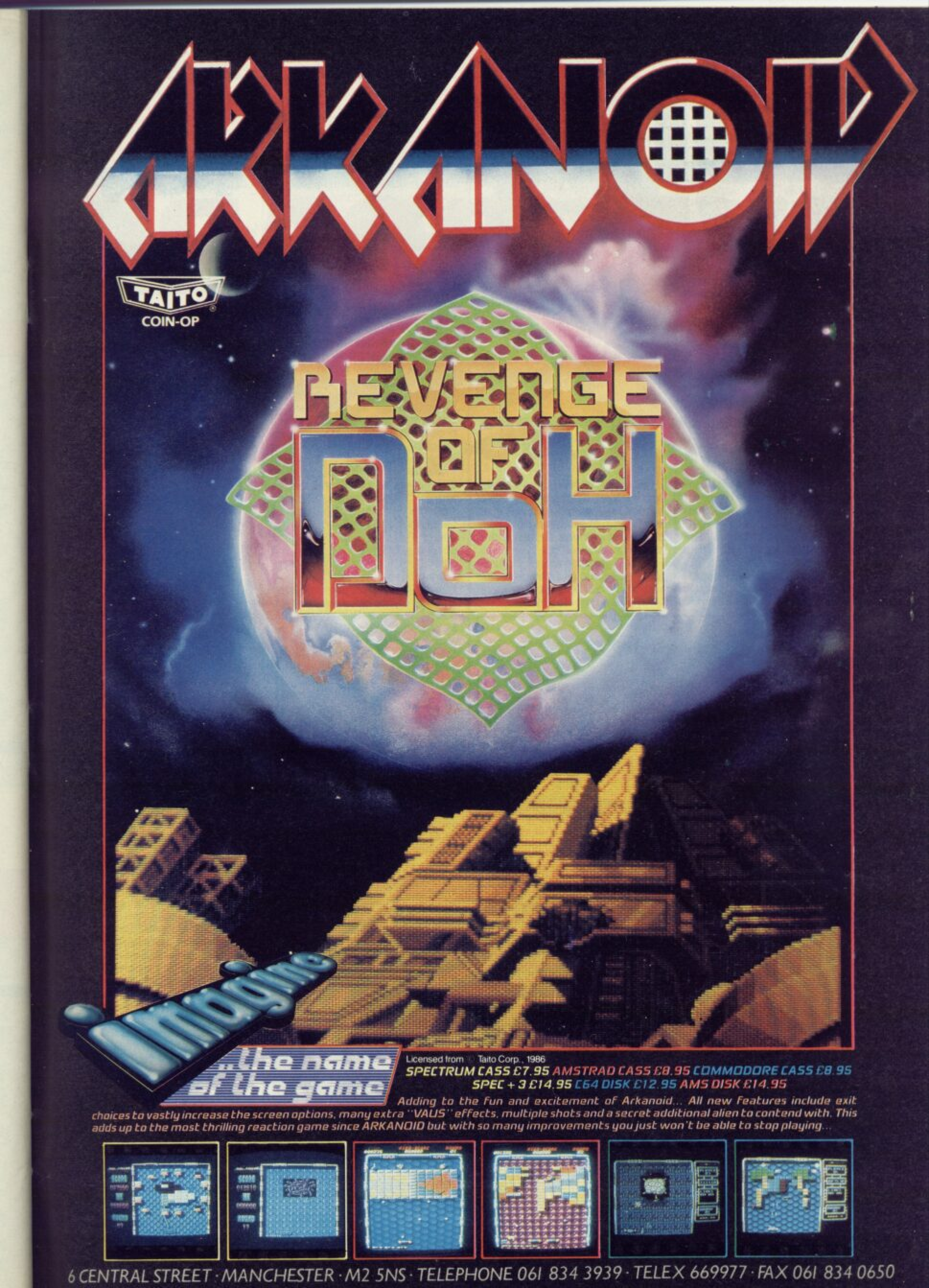
. . . means another four **?????** have to be collected . . .

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imagine
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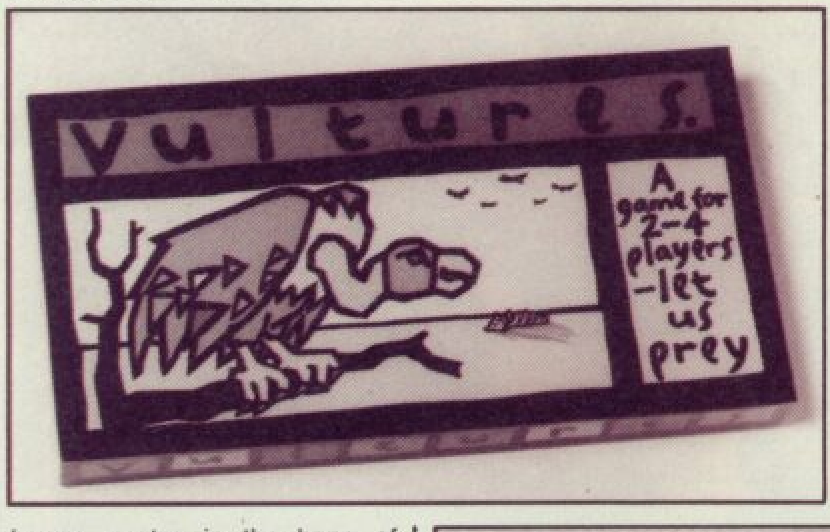
GOING OVERBOARD

Boardgames go electronic with Tankattack **from IQ Games – a strategic board game played with a Commodore 64/128 keeping the running totals. And for espionage lovers, there's** Spycatcher**.**

GAMES NEWS

Rolling a six to start, new boardgames company **Henry Games**, launches with four original products all designed, they say, to be efficient, long-lasting and with a high level of presentation.

The first, *Vultures*, dumps participants in a desert landscape playing vultures who roam the barren wastes in the hope of scavenging a few morsels of food. Catching prey and returning with it to the nest without being attacked is the objective. There's a balance to be maintained between keeping up the bird's strength but not overfeeding your pet or it becomes too fat to fly. *Vultures* comes in a chic box which wouldn't look out of place on anyone's side board. We'll be taking a close look at *Vultures* next month.



Megalomania is a (true to life?) simulation of politics. Honesty is never the best policy for a candidate raising campaign money to help win an election; from striking deals to bribing newspaper editors, dishonest tactics are the order of the game, and if the state is parlous, you can even hire assassins. As Henry Games says, *Megalomania* will tell you who your friends were.

The third and fourth titles are *Ascent* – a sort of *Chamonix Challenge* (TGM003) on a board – and *Lateral Thinking*, a cerebral spree to test your powers of strategy in the same way chess does, but with fewer pieces and simpler rules.



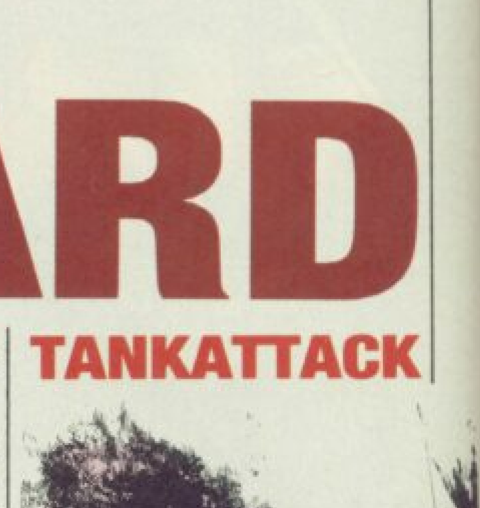
Paradigm (pronounced 'paradime') have run into a bit of trouble with their celebrity gossip game *Who's Had Who*. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) has refused TV advertising because of the game's suggestion of sexual promiscuity. Paradigm reckon they lost £500,000 worth of sales through not being allowed to advertise. The game is due to be repackaged and renamed *Celebrity Gossip – The Who's Had Who Of Games*. It's good too, well worth checking out next time you see it in the shops.

Waddingtons obviously think they have a winner on their hands with their new release *Cops'n'Robbers*. With the aid of cards, dice and roadblocks, all but one of the players begin to track down the robber Slippery Sid. The other gets to play Sid . . . More news on that one soon.

And while on the subject of solving mysteries and tracking down crimes, **MB Games** have *Mysteries Of Old Peking* on the way. The player becomes a celebrated detective from Beijing (to give the city its modern name). You can play several in fact, all with authentically Chinese names: Mr Wotsup, Mr Cloo, Mr Kwik or Mr Smartee – roll over Charlie Chan . . .

Crimes to be solved are selected from a casebook, the idea, of course, is to discover the culprit's identity. For those possessing an inquisitive mind, good powers of detection and a decent Chinese accent, *Mysteries Of Old Peking* might be light up your hon'lable stleet.

TANKATTACK



IQ Games
2-4 players, Cassette: £17.95
Diskette: £19.95

From Eire-based IQ Games, another bid for elusive success in placing a computer strategy game on a board, this time with the Commodore 64/128. Players actually move their pieces – an assortment of tanks and armoured cars – on the board, rather than watching them being moved on the screen. The computer keeps track of scores and military equipment.

The board is divided up into four fictitious countries, each with a capital city, military headquarters and repair depots. The players divide control of the countries equally amongst themselves. The objective is for one country to overthrow all others by gaining possession of the other's headquarters.

Bulletins are provided through the computer, informing players of their success or failure in moves, giving strategic reports (which player controls which country), political news and weather reports – the important because conditions influences the day's fighting. Despite these functions, the computer acts as little more than dice; determining how far players can move across the board towards the opposition's HQ.

The vehicles vary in power: armoured cars are either light or medium in power and the tanks are either light, medium or a main battle tank. The computer program takes these facts into consideration when deciding the outcome of a battle between two opposing forces. Battles are fought when

two players face each other no less than four squares apart. Losers remove their vehicle from play while the winner can continue his journey.

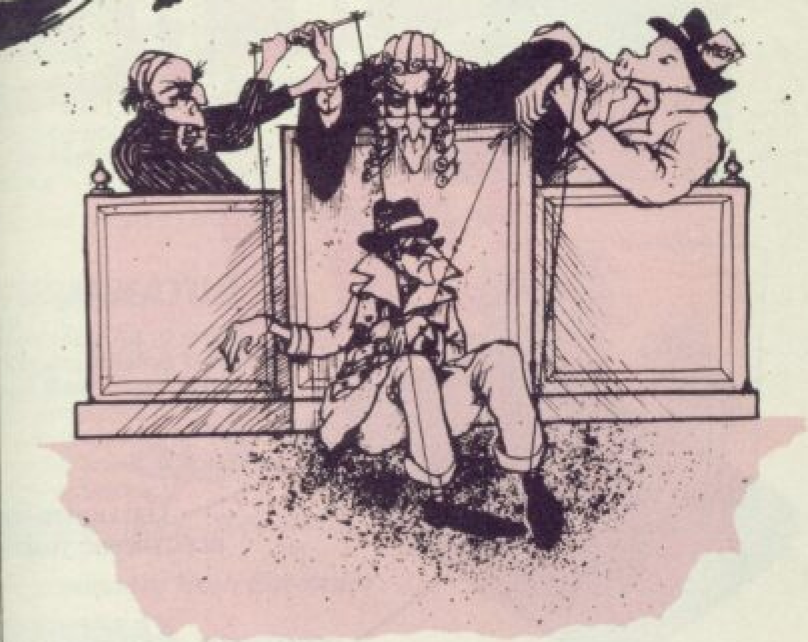
And so the game progresses . . . until one player has wiped out the opposition and taken control of all HQ's.

THE VERDICT

Unfortunately *Tankattack* doesn't succeed in grabbing the players' attention as most moves are slow and the computer program wastes a lot of time in relaying unimportant information. The battles, when two vehicles launch an attack, are a bit of a farce – it is not unusual for a light car to win over a main battle tank. The game may have some appeal for ardent strategistsbut for the everyday board games player, *Tankattack* holds little long term enjoyment – which is a pity as the game's concept is good. It seems we must still wait for the first ideal computer-moderated boardgame.



Spycatcher



SPYCATCHER

Paul Lamond Games
2-6 players, £11.95

Spycatcher – the plot has nothing to do with the famous Peter Wright novel – originally to be published by Playtwice Games, has now been handed over to Paul Lamond for release.

The objective – which, however, takes as its theme, the kind of problems an author following in Peter Wright's steps might encounter – is to move around the board visiting four sections to attempt to get your risqué book published. The sections comprise: Press, Government, The Courts and your Publisher; from all of whom you attempt to win a Permission Card. To gain the cards, players collect a series of Influence Cards, all of which have a number on them ranging from 1 to 12. The idea is to collect a run of three cards (eg 5, 6, 7 or 9, 10, 11), and then when you land on a solid colour segment you can apply for permission.

If the Permission Card allows you to publish, you keep it; get a card from each section and you have won the game. When applying for permission you may be challenged by another player who also has a run of cards of the same suit but with higher numbers, if the challenge is successful, they keep the permission card and you lose out.

It's quite a palava to go through to get your card but there are a few lucky squares which give free Permission Cards. The board tells you to 'Give a permission card to the player of your choice', we usually gave it to ourselves. Well, there's nothing in the rules to say you can't . . .



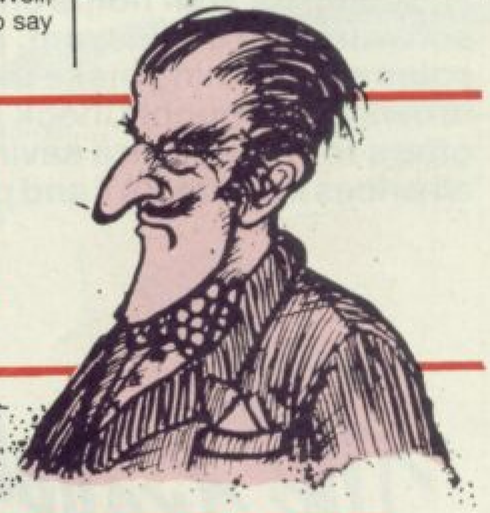
THE VERDICT

Spycatcher is, in essence, a very good game if you have the patience – games tend to go on for hours; we found ourselves cutting out a few rules to speed it up. The biggest problem lies in the fact that when the game gets going, each player has four or five things to do each turn, and because most actions have to be kept secret, other players can begin to lose interest. The board and its associated playing pieces are all well designed; the cartoon illustrations are amusing and help spice up the action. *Spycatcher* is better suited to methodical players, who can keep control of their moves and actions, but who do not expect anything too racy.

NEXT MONTH

***Vultures* is in our talons to be evaluated, we'll be asking some people on the street what they think about boardgames and we should also have *Piremid* from Egyptian Enterprises** and *Scruples II* from **MB Games to review.**

To publish or not to publish . . .



WIN SPYCATCHER – THE BOARDGAME!

Spycatcher the boardgame has been doing the rounds of the office, and preventing anyone from the serious business of playing computer games! And no wonder, because we have no less than 20 boxed games to give away in this special competition.

Spycatcher is only just now appearing in the shops as you read this, so if you want to get your hands on it hot from the press, all you have to do to be in with a chance is answer the four questions below. They are related to the four sections from which Permission Cards have to be gained – the courts, the government, press and your publisher. Write your answers on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, together with your name and address, and send it to: **SPYCATCHER COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY9 1DB*** and make sure your entries arrive by April 21. First 20 correct answers drawn win. Make sure you abide by the competition rules listed in the masthead or we'll have you slammed up against MI5 for interrogation – or even worse, make you publish your book in Australia!

1. Which is the highest court in Britain?
2. Within the government who is the Education Minister?
3. Historically, Caxton is well-known as a printer of books, but who is credited with inventing the printing press?
4. Which publishing group does Rupert Murdoch own?

the GAMES machine SHOPPING

Introducing four pages of great mail order shopping for your home entertainment. All the software you could want, plus joysticks, consoles and clothing make this a selection worth browsing through! Check out our special offers for those extra savings and remember, all prices include VAT and postage & packing.

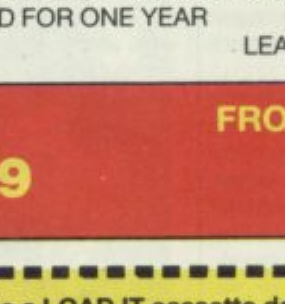
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TERMINATOR



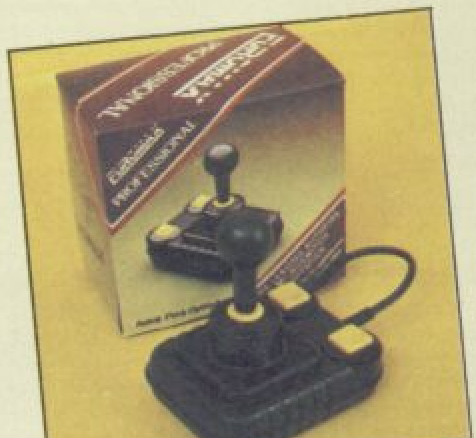
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Built like a hand grenade and just as lethal in action, this totally new Danish design packs top quality micro switches f... notch contr... k... high-scores.

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The designer joystick has arrived! All the features of the Normal PRO 5000 but with the added thrill of its unique see-through casing which offers a tantalising peek at the hi-tech innards.
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Our price £14.00

Ultimate cursor control wiz zee

EUROMAX WIZ CARD



This neat little box of tricks offers two fire buttons and left or right hand 8-way directional control through hypersensitive graphite contacts with minimised moving parts for added durability.
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PLEASE NOTE: JOYSTICKS AND DISKS ONLY AVAILABLE IN UK AND EIRE!

SOFTWARE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:

Firefly *(Ocean)*
Ferrari Formula One *(Electronic Arts)*
Xenon *(Melbourne House)*
Beyond Zork *(Infocom)*
Cybernoid *(Hewson)*
Dungeon Master *(Mirrorsoft)*
Task III *(Databyte)*
Predator *(Activision)*
Oids *(Mirrorsoft)*
The King of Chicago *(Mirrorsoft)*
Revenge of Doh *(Imagine)*
Magnetron *(Firebird)*
Get Dexter II *(Infogrames)*
Soko Ban *(Mirrorsoft)*
XR35 Fighter Mission *(Anco)*
Golden Path *(Firebird)*

THE MEGA CHOICE:

Apart from our highly recommended games list, you can order any game released by the major software houses to date on any of the following formats:
SPECTRUM 48K/128K, COMMODORE C64/C128, AMSTRAD CPC, MSX II, ATARI ST, AMIGA, IBM PC/XT.

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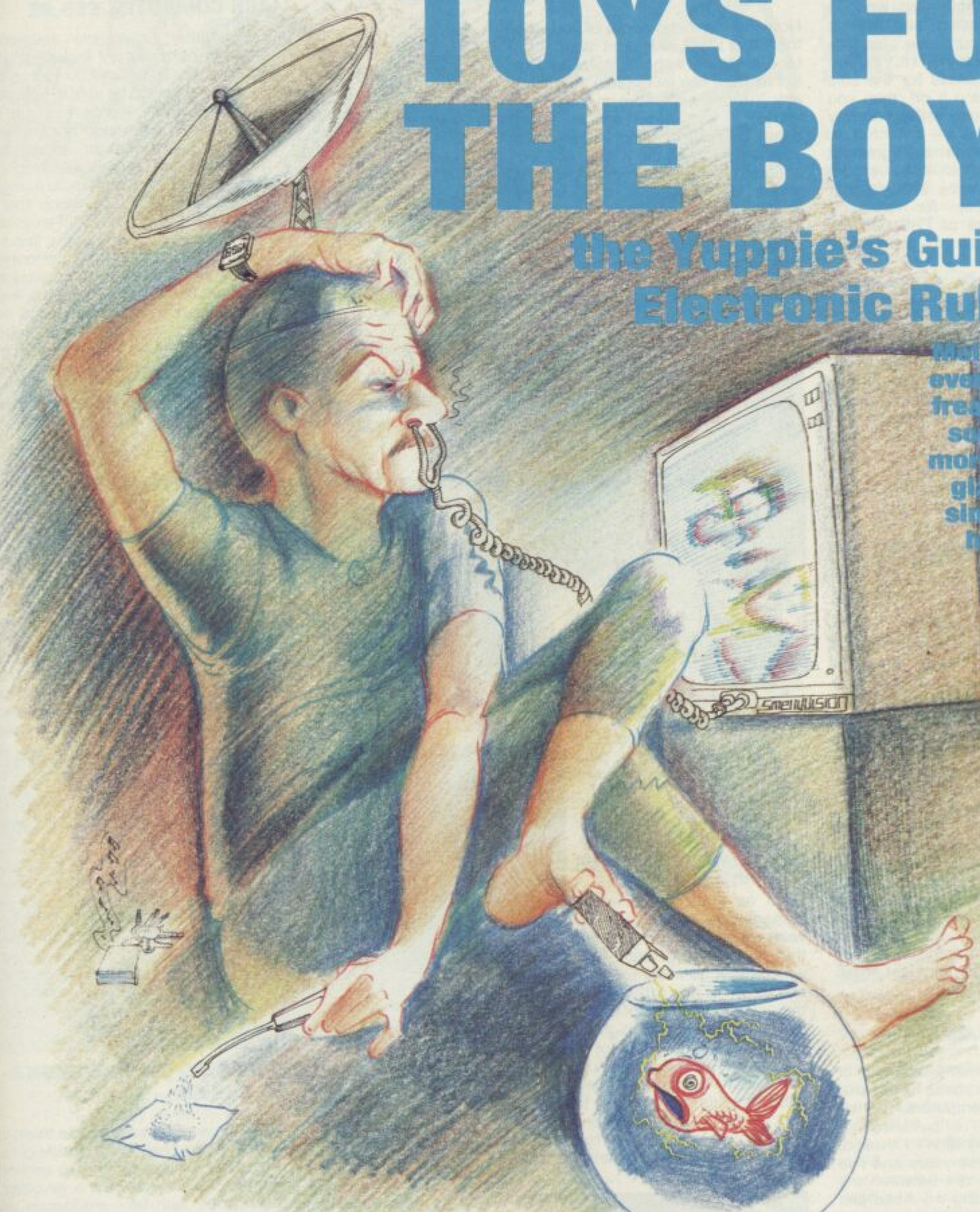
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10 GREAT GAMES II

TOYS FOR THE BOYS

the Yuppie's Guide to Electronic Rubbish



Mel Croucher, ever a gadget-freak, surveys some of the more essential gizmos you simply must have . . .

QUESTION: What's the difference between two Yuppies in a Porsche and a hedgehog? **ANSWER:** The hedgehog has its pricks on the outside. In other words, the phenomenon of YUPPIES (Young Urban Professional Idiots with Enormous Salaries), DINKYS (Double Income No Kids Yet) and PLODS (People Living Off Daddy's Shares), has generated a whole new market of expensive and completely impractical toys, all disguised as techno-gadgets. You can sell these people practically anything, as long as you stick to a few simple rules. And the rules for marketing this electronic rubbish are simple indeed:

RULE ONE: the gadget must have a microchip in it.
RULE TWO: the price must be extortionate, and end in the figures .95p.
RULE THREE: the item must be totally useless.
RULE FOUR: the adverts must include the words, 'ultimate', 'unique' and 'batteries not included'.

Once you have flogged boxfulls of expensive electronic codswallop to your Yuppies, you can then flog them even more boxfulls of even more

PRESS ANY KEY

expensive electronic codswallop, just by reminding them that there are wicked people about who want to steal their codswallop, and making your Yuppies purchase techno-security devices. Easy isn't it. First you sell something useless for the sole purpose of showing it off, then you sell the same idiot something equally useless to protect it.

It now gives me the greatest pleasure to field test some of the latest, ultimate, unique, batteries not included products for all you discerning readers of THE GAMES MACHINE. Hold on to your credit cards, here we go.

SNORE STOP £49.95

Yes folks, for only 50 quid you can strap this 'intricate micro-electronic sound wave detector' to your arm or leg, and if you should happen to snore during your slumbers, Snore Stop will deliver you an electric shock as a 'warning to your body to mend its noisy ways.' A must for all South African and Chilean torturers, who will be able to strap them to your vital parts and fall asleep on the job. Speaking of which, Snore Stop can also be activated by breaking wind and intimate congress.

KEYMINDER £4.95

We've all come across this little wonder haven't we, a key-ring designed with the sole purpose of getting lost. All you have to do to find your wayward keys is to whistle, and Keyminder will bleep its merry location song. 'Where's my car keys? Pheeeep! Beep-beep-beep-beep. Oh, fancy that, they're in my trouser pocket again. Well I never!' Just before Christmas I was attending a funeral at Portchester Crematorium, and very solemn it was too. As the coffin slid away on its conveyor belt towards the furnace, the organ requiem finished, and silence descended. Except for the widower's Keyminder answering that last organ pipe. Oh how he laughed.

MICROVAC £7.95

Now here's a supreme example of codswallop, the Microvac 'is the only way to clean computers, it will vacuum or blow ... batteries not included.' Now why didn't I think of that before. All these years and I've been cleaning the dirt between my input keys by placing my head just above the keyboard, inhaling and, er, blowing.

ONE TOUCH ELECTROLYSIS KIT £29.95

A perfect example of the Yuppie Toy. It works like this; you shell out just under 30 quid, and receive 'a breakthrough made possible by microchip technology'. What does it do? Well, I'm not quite sure to be honest. Apparently you pop it on some 'unwanted hair', whatever that may be, and One Touch removes it. And to think, underprivileged folk used to spend 50 pee on a pair of tweezers.

THE SONIC TAPE £229.95

Now there may be some of you who think that £229.95 is a bit steep for a tape measure without any tape. But Sonic Tape is a lovely little jobbie for any Yuppie with more money than sense. It sends out an ultrasonic beam, bounces it off the wall, and tells you how far away the wall is. And it is accurate to within a staggering plus or minus 20 millimetres. Imagine the scene, you've measured up your kitchen, the MFI units have been unpacked, and the fridge-freezer is two centimetres too big to fit in the



Snore Stop won't prevent bed-wetting, but at least you get a quiet night

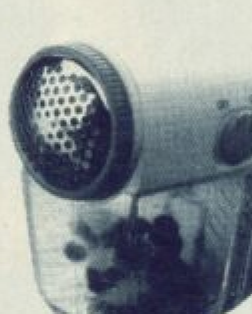
corner. 'Oh dearie me. Our Sonic Tape seems to have plussed or minussed a bit. Still, never mind, the fridge can go in the toilet.'

ENIGMA NIGHT & DAY WRIST WATCH £49.95

What an amazing advance in time management this is. Apart from the wrist watch you also get a blue strap that 'looks like genuine lizard skin' which must be news to all the green and brown lizards in the world. During the daytime, the face of a smiling sun appears, whereas at night ... yes, you guessed it, the face of a smiling moon appears. Now the Yuppies do not have to remember if they've just eaten breakfast or supper, they can look at their watch to remind them. And to think, I always used to look out of the window before I knew if it was day or night!



Just the job for a quick blow, and no need to inhale with the Microvac



Catch those sheep droppings in a Woolie Shaver

THE FRANKLIN SPELLING ACE COMPUTER £59.95

Yet another 'invaluable electronic product, batteries not included', the Spelling Ace measures six inches by four, and claims to be able to help you spell over 80,000 words. I am sad to report that it contained none of my favourite Anglo-Saxon expletives, cocked up most plurals with irregular endings, and couldn't handle a single proper noun or place name that I needed. In fact it was about as useful as a knitted condom. I did find an alternative gadget that performed excellently, however. It contained twice as many words, gave me their pronounciation and origin, had all the rude words, abbreviations, proper names and foreign phraseology that I wanted, and came in a package measuring five inches by seven inches. What's more it only cost £4.75. It's called the Concise Oxford Dictionary.

TS08E SATELLITE RECEIVER £17.95

A must for all self-respecting Yuppies. A bright yellow plastic satellite receiving dish, batteries not included, which can't receive satellite television signals. But what the hell, the neighbours will never know. 'Oh yah, Jocasta and Toby were watching the Serbo-Croatian News only this morning, fascinating, and so good for their education doncha kneau.' Coming soon, fake yellow plastic cordless telephones, fake yellow plastic bags of cocaine and fake yellow plastic Filipino maids.

THE WOOLIE SHAVER £7.95

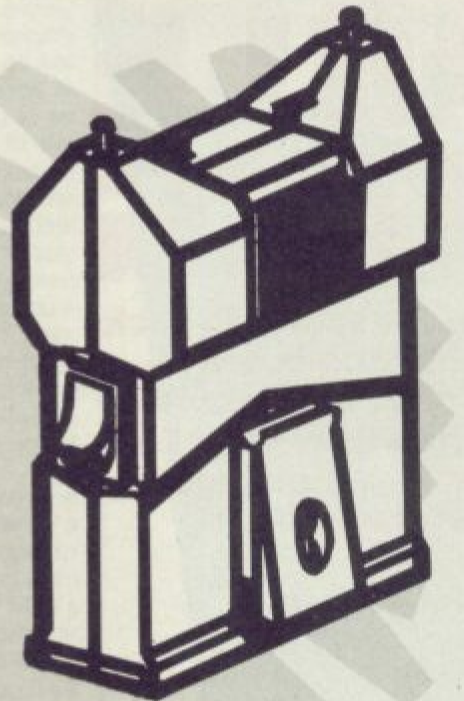
No, no, it's not an item of sexual hairdressing with a Belfast accent, the Woolie Shaver 'makes sweaters look like new' by gently shaving off those wee bits of fluffy wool which grow overnight when you put your jumper to bed. And to think, mankind used to use primitive fingers and thumbs to do the job. (Batteries not included, by the way).

BLUEBIRD ENVIROVISION E-VX £59.95

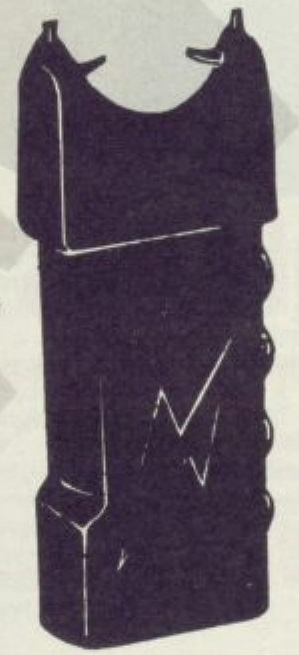
My all-time personal favourite Yuppie toy, taking codswallop to new heights of gullibility. Now get this, a sort of scratch 'n' sniff gizmo in a revolting plastic box with fake woodgrain all over it, and a selector knob on the front. The idea is that you plonk it on top of your television or video, and dial various smells to accompany the picture. Would I lie to you? Smellyvision has arrived, offering the following choice:

PINEWOOD (a bit like the stuff you pour down the bog when it gets blocked.)
SPRING (a bit like 'pine')
HOME (I think it's meant to be baking bread, but it's more like dead fish-batter)
SEA (spot on, exactly like the contents of the batter)
ACTION (smells like burning rubber to me, I wonder what action they mean)





The Automate Car Alarm everyone wants to steal





Some of the stunning little numbers that lend a new meaning to being charged with assault

MUSK (sweat)
HEAVEN (sweet sweat)
LATE-NITE (very sweet sweat)

I tried out the Bluebird Envirovision during *News At Ten*, and managed not to throw up until half way through. Strangely enough, kneeling over the lavvy pan, I thought I could smell a Pinewood.

Well, that's quite enough of all that. Now that the Yuppies have got all these invaluable aids to modern living, how are they going to protect them from getting nicked? Read on, my friends, read on.

THE FALSE HOUSE ALARM £19.95

If you buy this one, you've already been robbed! You hand over 20 quid, and they give you a little tin box painted red, with a tiny light bulb stuck on it (batteries not included). There's also a FALSE CAR ALARM, for anyone who's got a false car.

AUTOMATE SVI CAR ALARM £29.95

Brilliant! I mean absolutely brilliant codswallop. Here's how it works. You buy the Automate Car Alarm, which is cunningly disguised as a car-phone, and stick it on your centre console with four little sticky pads. Batteries are unfortunately not included, so nip off and purchase one AA and four PP3s, and by the time you get back, someone will have smashed your quarter light in order to steal what they think is your car-phone. Only it's not. Um, I think that's how it works.

CHAMPAGNE 800gm DEAD BLOW HAMMER £12.95

Now, if you should happen to get back to your car before the thief has made off with your Car Alarm, all you need is a Dead Blow Hammer. It looks like a real hammer, but it's made out of plastic, with a lot of little lead balls packed into its head. A load of balls is just the thing for our Yuppie chums.

SAMCO SONIC REPELLER £24.95

This one actually runs off the mains, so batteries are not included, and emits ultrasonic waves 'that are believed to affect the nervous system of pests'. Well, I don't know what I did wrong, but I stuck it in the same room as a load of T'Pau records, and they're still there.

STOP-THIEF INTRUDER STICKERS £4.95

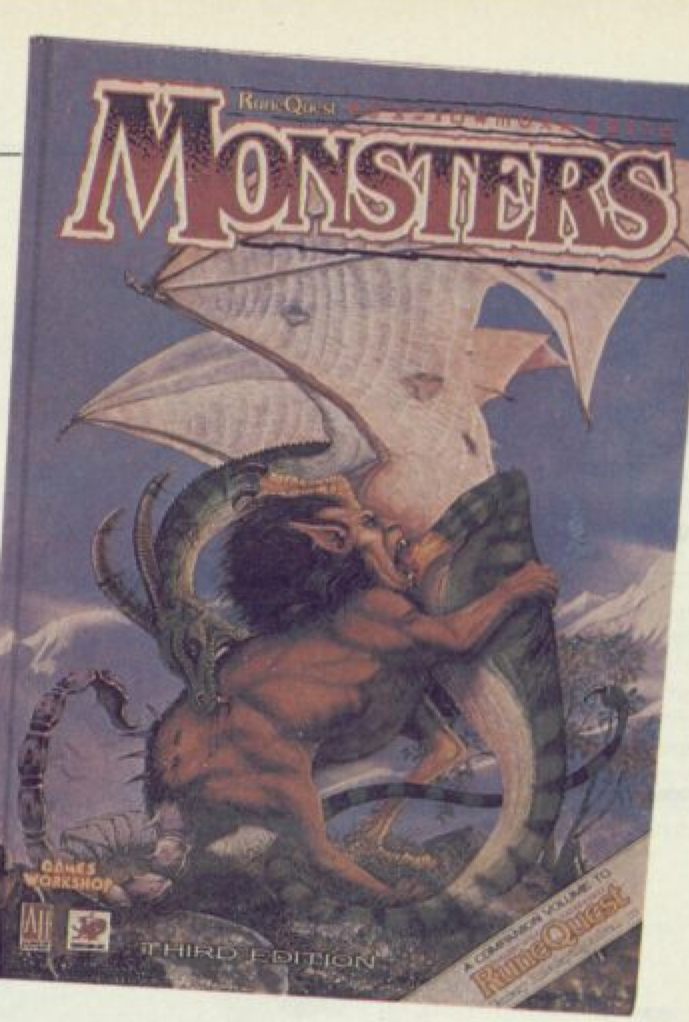
A set of little red stickers with a picture of a man in a hat on them acting suspiciously, and the words 'Alarm Fitted' printed on the four very little stickers, and 'Neighbourhood Watch' printed on the two quite little stickers. In this way you can let all potential burglars know that not only have you got something worth nicking, but you can't afford a real burglar alarm.

THE PERSONAL DEFENDER £59.95
THE EQUALISER £49.99
THE PROTECTOR £49.95
THE PERSONAL PROTECTOR £39.99

'When the chips are down, beat the attacker with Microchips!' They're legal, they're probably lethal and they're the very latest thing for Yuppies frightened of the dark. Next time you are mugged, raped, kidnapped, or simply beaten to a pulp for the hell of it, don't worry, here's what you do. Ask the attacker if he would kindly wait a moment, and allow you to whip out your Personal Defender-Equaliser-Protector. Next invite him to stand still for five seconds so that you can switch your hand-held gadget on, and apply it to the person. OK? Good, now deliver 50,000 volts up the bastard and watch his central nervous system fry. There are only a few minor things that worry me about these Stun Guns. For a start, anyone can buy them, mail order. For example **Security Specialists Ltd** of Chelmsford invite you to send them cash, and don't ask if you are over 18. This means that the muggers, rapists, and all the rest can get ahold of the damn things, and are much more likely to use them than the Yuppie is. Secondly, if kids get their hands on them they will certainly use them, just 'to see if they work', on each other, dogs, babies, or little old ladies coming out of Post Offices. Thirdly, they offer a totally unrealistic sense of security to frightened people. The chances of sizzling the nuts off a couple of attackers wading into a lone victim are by no means 'guaranteed the ultimate in personal protection.' Just you try counting five seconds off, and picture the situation. And if you were wondering, batteries are not included.

Yah, well, I heaupe you've enjoyed my little survey, dahlings. Mind how you geau, okay yah. Must be orff and buy some batteries before Harrods cleauses. Byeee!

IMPORTANT!
As we go to press we have heard that Mel's piece on Stun Guns requires an update. On February 25 The House Of Lords ruled that Stun Guns such as those featured above should come under the category of firearms. As a result their possession and use is now covered by the provisions of the Firearms Act, and it is illegal to use such a weapon, or carry one without the appropriate licence being first obtained.



FLEXIBLE FIGHTING

The release this month of the scenario pack Griffin Island **provides John Woods a welcome excuse to take a look at his favourite FRP system,** RuneQuest**. And from West End there's an addition to its** Star Wars **range in the form of a pacey boardgame of spacefighter combat.**



RUNEQUEST

RuneQuest – Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure; 96pp Hardback £7.95
Advanced RuneQuest; 160pp Hardback £12.95
RuneQuest Monsters; 112pp Hardback £9.95
RuneQuest Griffin Island; 114pp Hardback £10.99
Role-Playing Rules, Background Book, Scenario Pack
Published by Games Workshop under license from Avalon Hill

RuneQuest is a fantasy RPG with a complex history. Published in the US by Chaosium (*Call Of Cthulu* and many other games), it became popular in Britain six years ago when Games Workshop licensed the rules for a UK printing. When Chaosium sold the rights to Avalon Hill, who completely rewrote and repackaged the system, the UK printing disappeared, and for a while only the Avalon Hill US edition was available. Whilst its content was excellent, the price of the imported materials put the game well beyond the reach of most of us, and *RuneQuest* more or less vanished from the game scene in this country.

But last year Games Workshop came to the rescue with another licence agreement, opting for a sturdy hardback format rather than the flimsy paperbacks of Avalon Hill's expensive boxed sets, and *RuneQuest* is once more on the up and up. Clearly the game must have something going for it for so many different companies to have been involved – what's all the fuss about?

The first popular RPG to escape the Dungeon, *RuneQuest* opened a whole new world of adventure to its players. Unlike *Dungeons And Dragons* and other early games, PCs do not have to be drawn from a fixed selection of character types or 'classes'. Instead, every character has a skill rating in every field. Thus a barbarian can learn to pick locks and brew poisons as well as just ride horses and swing a battleaxe, and the lowliest clerk or barmaid can become skilled at fighting and casting magic, if an adventuring lifestyle should provide opportunities to do so. In exchange for a little extra book-keeping there is freedom to develop your character to become capable in exactly the fields you wish.

SELECTED DAMAGE

RuneQuest also features a sophisticated combat system. As in other games, a character or monster has a certain number of hit points reflecting its ability to survive wounds or damage, but in *RuneQuest* individual body locations are kept track of as well as overall damage. So a character might take an arrow in the arm and lose the use of a shield but still be able to wield a broadsword, or a manticore taking a well-placed axe blow to the tail might be rendered unable to use its sting – good news for anyone so unlucky as to be fighting one! This extra detail makes combat much easier to visualise in play, whilst still being relatively quick-moving.

RuneQuest owes its great overall appeal to an extremely well thought-out and elegant basic game structure. Skills are expressed as a percentage score which the player or referee must roll under on percentile dice for success. A spectacularly low roll means that something wonderful has happened – a so-called critical success – whilst a really awful failure or fumble results from a particularly high score.

This basic system is used to resolve almost everything that can take place in the game, from fighting (using percentages for Shield Parry, Dagger Attack, Dodge and so on) to activities such as swimming, tracking enemies or wild beasts and disarming traps. Adverse circumstances or abnormally difficult situations result in a modification to the dice roll, chosen at the referee's discretion in line with guidelines in the rules. A character's abilities increase with experience in a realistic manner, since after an adventure in which a given skill was successfully used, the player makes a dice roll to try to increase the percentage in the skill.

EFFECTIVE SORCERY

The beauty of this system is that anything can be included in the game in a straightforward and consistent way. Perhaps the best example of this is the use of magic. The rules detail three different types of which the two commonest, sorcery and spirit magic, use the standard skill system almost without modification. Characters have a percentage chance of success with any spell they know. In the case of spirit magic, least powerful of the three types, this percentage depends solely on the character's innate ability or 'Power'. For more effective sorcery spells – corresponding roughly to the classic wizardry of fantasy literature – a character must learn each spell from scratch, building up its chance of success from a low starting percentage. Other sorcery skills can be combined with the basic spell, allowing sorcerers to modify the effects by, for instance, increasing the duration or range of a spell. Finally there is divine magic, granted by gods to their priests and initiates, which enables some powerful spells to be cast with relative ease. But to use divine magic a character must effectively dedicate his or her life to the service of the chosen deity, and this may be too restrictive for many adventuring types!

The original Avalon Hill version of the current (third) edition of the *RuneQuest* rules came as an expensive boxed set of five softback rulebooks in two-tone printing. Games Workshop have very wisely decided to rework this into a series of individual hardbacks, keeping the same attractive and clear typestyle but livening up the text with a scattering of full-colour illustrations. The first book, *RuneQuest Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure*, gives all the information about the system that a novice player needs to get started. Character generation, combat and skill rules are all introduced along with the basics of the three magic systems and a selection of the commoner monsters.

Advanced RuneQuest is a larger supplementary volume with information pitched principally at

referees, including further details on magic and additional spells, combat and skill rules covering less common situations, a short introductory scenario and a handy pull-out reference section. Also in this volume are the excellent character background rules, enabling referees to introduce PCs with additional skills learnt from earlier lives in a highly consistent way. Thus a PC who started life as a hunter will be skilled in riding, tracking, spear-throwing and so on. This book also includes notes on converting character statistics from the previous Second Edition rules, the principal changes being the renaming or combining of certain skills.

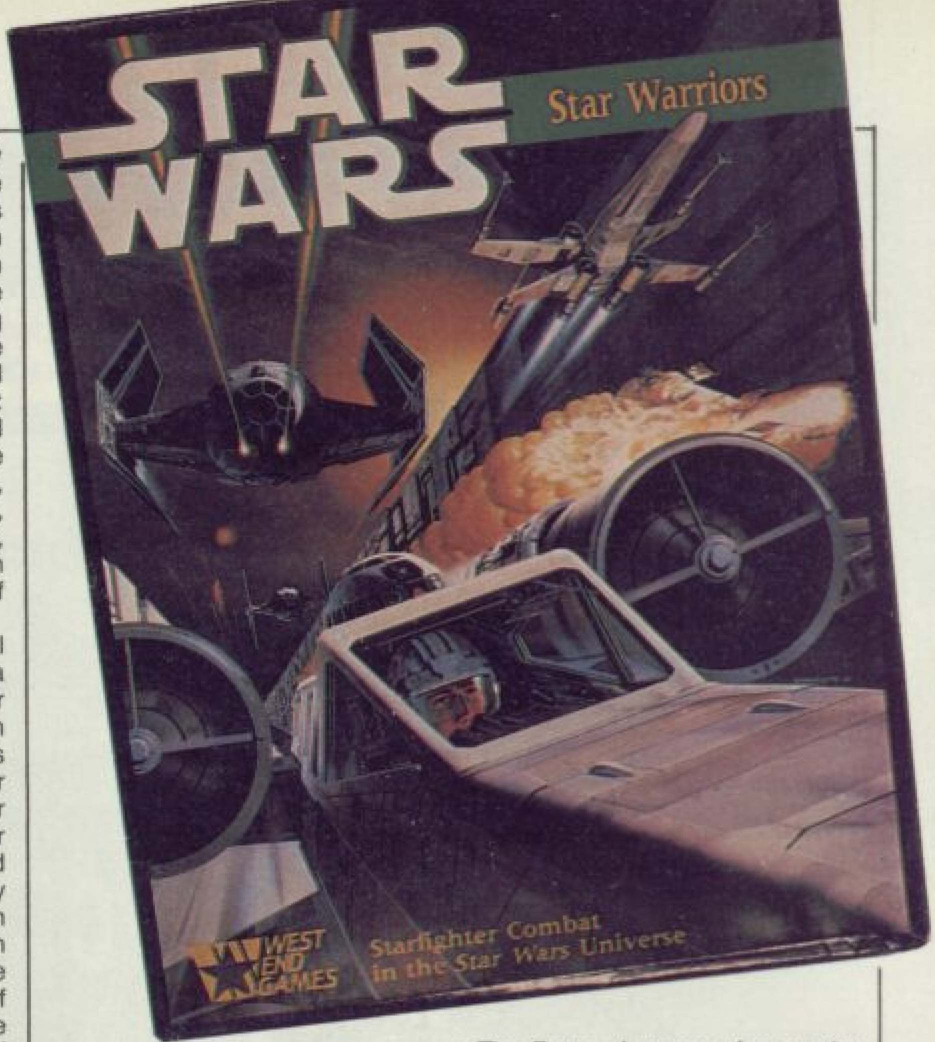
Finally, *RuneQuest Monsters*, details 95 creatures of varying degrees of nastiness. Each beastie is illustrated, some in full colour, and the description includes not just rules of generating each type of creature but also a ready-to-use example of a typical one, which can help speed play. Not all the creatures are nasties – domestic beasts such as horses are featured too, and there is a large section of humans from all walks of life. This book is probably the poorest value of the three, with the text being thinned out by over-generous illustrations. It is quite possible to get by without it, though – the selection of creatures in the first book is sufficient to get started and to give referees enough examples to invent their own monsters.

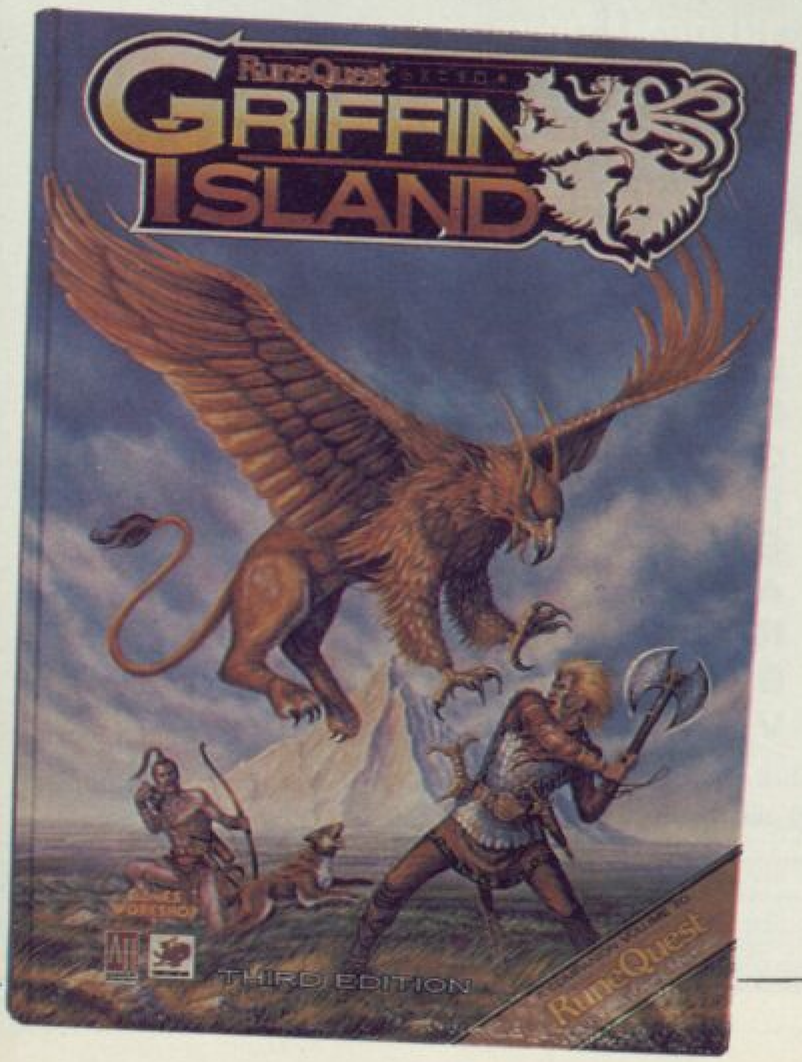
MOUNTAIN AND ISLAND

Lastly comes the first scenario pack for the new edition, *Griffin Island*. In its original incarnation of *Griffin Mountain*, this was widely held as one of the best adventure packs ever for any system, so it is a real pleasure to see it back in print. The change of setting to an island makes it easier to fit the material into an existing campaign, and this is definitely the way to use this pack – it is not ideal for beginning players or referees: instead of offering prepared adventures for the referee to take players through one step at a time, the book details the geography, human and monster inhabitants, treasures and perils of Griffin Island and leaves the exact use of these details to the referee.

There are statistics for several creatures unique to the island, a selection of wandering groups for players to encounter ranging from the welcome (trader Joh Mith's caravan) to the deadly (an orc war patrol), full descriptions of the four towns of the island including their rulers and other inhabitants, and details of ten particularly interesting areas, any of which would form a natural base for an evening's adventuring and some of which, like the dreaded Crypt of Ockless, provide a fearsome challenge for even the toughest of adventuring groups. There is a handy pull-out reference section and an attractive fold-out colour map of the whole island. Those responsible for this reworking have done an excellent job, and players can once again look forward to the perils of the River of the Damned, Firshala's Prison and of course Griffin Mountain itself – tread carefully!

To sum up, Games Workshop have produced a first-rate repackaging of the *RuneQuest* Third Edition. Anyone who wants an FRP system with both realism and playability, and which can be readily adapted and expanded to fit in with almost any fantasy world, need look no further. *Griffin Island* is a bargain, a truly first-rate scenario pack for referees who are prepared to put in a little imaginative effort. Dust off those spell foci, polish up the chainmail and keep your shortsword ready – *RuneQuest* is back with a vengeance, and in what is otherwise a slack time for UK roleplaying let's hope it is here to stay!





IN BRIEF

Finally, and briefly, two other products have found their way to my desk this month.

Star Warriors (£12.95) is West End Games's boardgame of *Starfighter Combat In The Star Wars Universe*. As well as being a game in its own right, *Star Warriors* can also be used to fight out starship battles that occur within *Star Wars – the Roleplaying Game* (reviewed last month). My feeling is that this would slow down roleplaying too much to be used all the time, but if you play *Star Wars* in a group that also enjoys boardgaming it may be worth considering for those climactic shoot-outs.

The 48-page rulebook describes a comprehensive 'standard game' which introduces the basics of the system and allows all your favourite *Star Wars* spaceships – X-wings, Y-wings, TIE fighters and the Millenium Falcon, amongst others – to blow each other to bits, whilst a section on the 'advanced game' gives optional rules for asteroids, Star Destroyers, ground-based weaponry and, of course, use of The Force. A range of scenarios gives suggestions for play ranging from simple dogfights to the attack on the Death Star itself.

The other game components are attractively designed – full-colour counters for spaceships and the like, a handy stand-up reference card, a counter storage tray and a large, colourful map. My only quibble is that the map, printed on thin card, is reluctant to lie flat. The rules are in the usual clear West End style with plenty of examples, and by keeping the more complex elements in the form of optional rules, the designers have made it very easy to get into without sacrificing detail. By no means an essential item for *Star Wars players, but a well-produced stand-alone game that provides plenty of fast-moving dogfighting fun.*

And lastly, Games Workshop have released a Character Pack (£3.99) for their Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play system (reviewed in TGM002). This is principally a pad of 50 blank character record sheets, with a completely different layout from those in the rulebook with their acres of wasted space. The new two-sided sheets allow easy record-keeping for character statistics, career information, weapon and spell details and just about everything else. Also included is a 16-page booklet with tables allowing random generation of every aspect of a character's physical description and background – ideal for roleplayers with no imagination but I hope a waste of time and money for most of us. Oh, and there's a cut-out 'dress your own Old Worlder' as well. Worth buying for the nicely streamlined character record sheets if, like me, you are too lazy to design your own, but don't expect too much out of the background booklet.



ANOTHER SANGUINARY COMPETITION!

WIN A PERSONAL CD PLAYER AND COPIES OF CAPTAIN BLOOD

MUSIC TO YOUR EARS FROM INFOGRAMES

CAPTAIN BLOOD is the newest space adventure to swim the Channel from French software house **Ere Informatique** to become available in the UK thanks to **Infogrames**.

Previewed last month, *Captain Blood* tells of computer programmer Bob Blood, who was sucked into his own space travel simulation and became the notorious Captain Blood. Blood's objective is to scour the universe searching for five clones of himself, along the way he meets 16 different types of alien life-forms, all of whom he can communicate with and, occasionally, offer him help with his quest covering 32,000 planets.

The game has only just been translated into English – and we've got copies of it to give away, together with the special first prize of a personal Compact Disc player, complete with speakers, so you can listen to endless hours of Jean-Michel Jarre – the theme music for *Captain Blood* is taken from his *Zoolook* LP. The winner also gets a copy of the game, as do the ten runners up. Don't forget to state if want an Atari ST, Amiga or a PC version.

If you really want to help Captain Blood on his search, you're going to have to do a bit of searching yourself. Hidden in the wordsquare are the ten words printed here – locate them all, cut out the coupon and send it to: **SANGUINACIOUS COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than April 21, and you could be in with a chance of scooping up the personal CD player. Abide by the rules, printed in the masthead, or we'll leave you lost in spaaaaaaaace.

INFORMATIQUE BLOOD
ALIEN CAPTAIN
ZOOLOOK ERE
UNIVERSE DISC
INFOGRAMES COMPACT

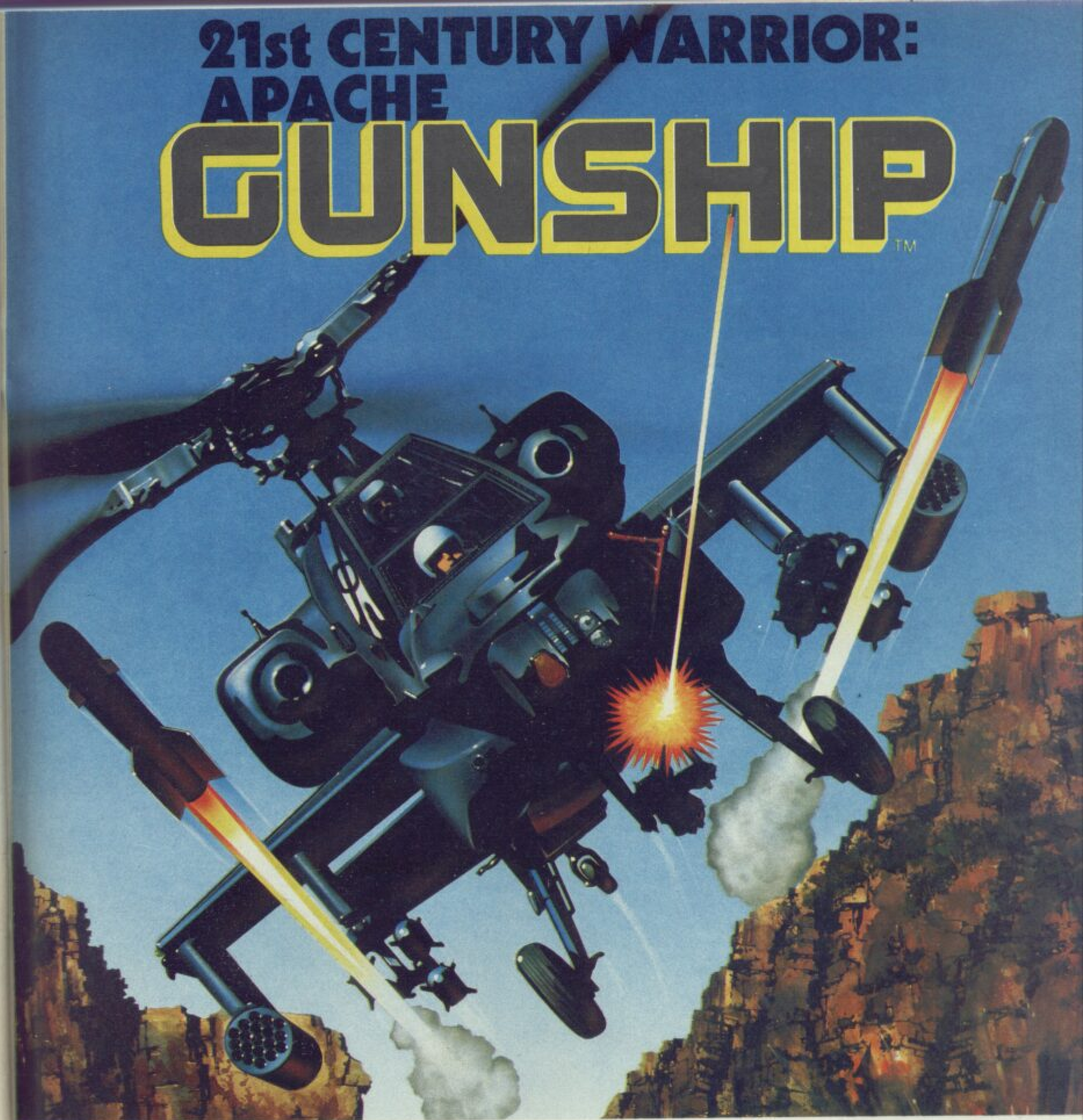
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SHE'S MAD! SHE'S BAD!! she's brought her dad.
MERCY DASH
STORY by MEL CROUCHER
PICTURES by ROBIN EVANS
AMO AMAS AMINIBUS MERCY DASH RECTUMINUS
DO YOU, ANNA, TAKE FERGUS MACBOGGIT TO BE YOUR LAWFUL WEDDED HUSBAND?
I DO, UNCLE MEL!
I JUST LOVE BEING A BRIDESMAID, DAD— ESPECIALLY FOR SUCH PRECOCIOUS UNDERAGE COMPUTER PROGRAMMERS!
SEX AN' DRUGS AN' ROCK'N'ROLL MERCY'LL SOON BE ON THE DOLE
BUT I REELY LOVE THE RESHEPTIONSH... MAKING OLD FRIENDSH, MEETING MEETING NEW ONESH... HEY, BUTT OUT, BONEY, BAGSHY I THE BUBBLY... HIC!
CLAK
HI, I'M SIMON HARVEY OF HEADLINES PR
HI, I'M DAVE CARLOS OF SOLUTION PR
I HEAR THAT STUPID COW, MERCY HAS DROPPED YOU IN IT AGAIN! WELL, HOW ABOUT....
49 HOURS OF BOOZE-INDUCED COMATOSE LATER...
PTOOEY. THAT'S BETTER OUT THAN IN! EMPTY THAT AND COOK MY BREAKFAST, DAD... I SUPPOSE I'D BETTER LOOK AT LAST WEEK'S MAIL....
FIREFOXACHE!! TWO MORE SOFTWARE HOUSES HAVE FIRED ME! THAT LEAVES ME WITH A CLIENTEL OF ZILCH! WADDAMIGONNADO, ROVER?
Dear mercy. Since you insist on beating away your fees and neglecting your obligation to us, we've decided to switch to Dave Carlos of Solution.
Dear mercy. Pig orf!
GOTTA THINK... GOTTA COME UP WITH A BRAND NEW SCAM...
3 SECONDS LATER
GOD.. THIS IS GONNA REQUIRE LONG DEEP PENETRATING RESEARCH..
GOT IT! DAD, GET ME MIRRORSOFT ON THE 'PHONE... NO, FORGET IT, I'LL DO IT! I NEED TO TALK TO THEM THIS YEAR!
HELLO, MIRRORSOFT!
PATTIKINS! MERCY DASH SPEAKING...
OMIGAHHD! QUICK! GET ME TEN PACKETS OF SNOUT AND CALL IN THE RECEIVERS!
DO WOT?
ER- I SAID, I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOUT, I'VE GOT A FAULTY RECEIVER!
LISTEN, PAT, I'M OFFERING YOU THE RIGHTS TO THE BIGGEST CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT YET!
GORBACHEV?
NO!
MEL CROUCHER?
NO, NO! LOOK, WHO'S THE GREATEST FIGURE IN SOFTWARE HISTORY? MEEE!! YES! NATURALLY, THIS WOULD BE A MIRRORSOFT EXCLUSIVE!
3 MINUTES LATER
CLAIRE HIRSCH, ACTIVISION TOKEN WOMAN SPEAKING!
CLAIRE! DARLING! IT'S ME, MERCY DASH!
OH MY OUT! I'M GOD! I MEAN...
CLAIRIKINS, FOR A VEWY MODEST ADVANCE PAYMENT, I MAY BE PERSUADED TO ENDORSE YOUR NEXT BIGGIE... AN ACTIVISION EXCLUSIVE, NATURELLEMENT!
SOON...
HM. RACHEL DAVIES, ANITA SINCLAIR, CLEM CHAMBERS... US GOILS HAVE GOTTA STICK TOGETHER! WELL THAT'S ALL THE SUCKERS, I GUESS!
I'LL BE BREAKFASTING AT THE RITZ. COME ON, ROVER!
THIS IS IT, DADS! THE VISUALS FROM ALL MY CHUMS AT THE SOFTWARE HOUSES!
3 DAYS LATER..
I HOPE THEY'VE SENT SOME DOSH, TOO, OR... OH, LEASH IT!! WHAT THE....
Defender of the Clown
MERCY DASH IS MISTRESS of the
MERCY DASH in: JERK the RIPOFF
Thundercows
FEATURING MERCY DASH AS THE BIGGEST COW OUT
THE BAGS! IT'S A CONSPIRACY TO TRY AND MAKE A MONKEY OUTTA MERCY! EEEEK! I'LL KILLEM! I'LL KILLEM!!!
RIP RIP RIP
MERCY AND HER LITTLE OLD DAD FALL UPON HARD TIMES... THEN, 3 WEEKS LATER...
COME AND SHARE THE LAST OF THE ROVER BROTH WITH ME, DAD... OH.. WHAT'S THAT?
"DEAR MIZ DASH"..BLAH BLAH "CHEMICALS.." WOW!"...UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF SEVERAL OF YOUR PREVIOUS CLIENTS, WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO ENDORSE OUR NEW PRODUCT, WHICH WE FEEL IS IDEALLY SUITED TO YOUR IMAGE"!
QUICK! WHERE'S MY QUILL? I'VE GOTTA SIGN THESE CONTRACTS AND WHIZ 'EM BACK BY FIRST POST! OH, THANK YOU, GOD FOR SENDING ME SOME TOTAL SUCKERS!!
3 MORE WEEKS LATER...
THE NEW WONDER TOILET CLEANER!!
KILLS 100% GERMS EACH HIT!!
MERCY DASH
CLEANS BOGS IN A FLASH
MERCY DASH GOES RIGHT DOWN THE PAN!!!
GOSH, MERCY, I ONLY SAID I WAS GLAD TO HEAR YOU'RE SOLVENT NOW!
THE RAM
HERE SHE COMES.. NOW, YOU KNOW ALL THE WORDS TO THE ADVERT JINGLE? ON THE BEAT OF THREE, THEN..

OVERTURE AND BEGINNERS PLEASE

Despite what he promised last month, Jon Bates reveals he lied, but claims he was seduced from the purely straight and tapeless path by some 16-bit utilities which have drummed up his enthusiasm.

The grand design for this month was two superb utilities for the ST and a guide to terminology and music, but having spent the last two months looking at MIDI software for the Atari ST range, we have a complete change of plan. Two drum programs and three music utilities for the Amiga (and a few for the ST) that are self-contained, don't require any additional keyboards, modules or bolt-ons, and are all suitable for absolute musical dimbos (this word is not in our dictionary and we take no responsibility for it -Ed). Some of the software has been available for some months, some has been whizzed to us extra quick for immediate appraisal.

First on the testbench is the *HiTec Drum Studio* for the Amiga which is marketed by **Robtek**, but as it is written by one Holger Gehrmann, I strongly suspect that it is German in origin, (Gehrmann, the German?). Anyway, the instructions are in German and English.

The loading screen is really first rate with a good, sampled, eight-bar, repeating tune. Hey, I thought, if this tune is using the drum program we really do have something special. Now unless I am mistaken, or the loading tune was subject to some extreme processing in the drum department when recorded originally, they are not the same. The loading screen tune has some pretty meaty and well formed drums, which is nearly as far as you can get from the samples that are easy to get on with; I say fairly easy because you can't use the mouse with it.

PAPER CUT OUTS

I thought we might have got away from keyboard overlays by now, especially with 512K of memory to go at. The reason given is so that you can run the program without the screen being turned on. I'm not sure I see the point of this as I can't imagine many circumstances where this would help me. A hunt in the software box and accompanying paraphernalia did not reveal an overlay. It could be that it got rotovated in the last tidy-up season we had in the office, but this meant that I had to keep referring to the list of key functions. Key functions are okay, and in some cases quicker, but no mouse option is a bit mean.

The demo mode is started off by the space bar. It is at this point that the comparison with the loading tune is immediately apparent. The drums here sound very thin and tinny, having an overactive reverb which makes them sound positively cavernous plus an awful swoosh effect on each sound. The hi-hat has a lousy noise on its release – it clicks and bumps, in other words. Someone has not done their maths correctly here, methinks.



The drums have an overactive reverb which makes them sound positively cavernous.

Now, how do you stop this demo? Answer, I don't know. And the booklet doesn't tell me directly. Hit every key in sight and thankfully it stops. The answer is either on page two of the booklet or it could be on the overlay.

The structure of this program is that of most drum programs: short patterns are created of up to eight bars in length which are then assembled into complete songs. It will remember about 100 patterns and 10 complete songs. Performance data is automatically stored on the program disk, but it can be stored separately as well.

CRACKLE ON

There is a choice of 20 sounds which can also be played without the sequencer running. Each drum can have its pitch and volume fine tuned, which is remembered for each note so you can have an infinite set of drum sounds. All the usual features are here – number of beats per bar, quantization, (that's the bit that rounds up your inaccuracies) and speed. *HiTec Drum Studio* only records in real-time so there is very little chance of editing anything you have done or entering really complex patterns. Patterns can be erased or copied. As you record there is an audible metronome beat (or 'crackle', as the handbook has it!), flashing light on screen and the power light flashes as well. This causes the CPU some problems because there is a fractional pause every now and again as it hiccups its way round three places at once. I'm dubious of the programming. Another fickle finger can be pointed at the programming since there is a rather suspicious screen flicker that did not occur with any other programs run on this Amiga.

Right that's enough on this one. Basically it is very poorly thought through and I think that one should expect a lot more from a drum machine than this – I'd rather have the loading screen and its soundtrack than the ensuing skimpy and somewhat tacky program.

ADRUM'S PROJECT

Next: *Adrum* from **Bullfrog**. I first saw and heard this in its embryonic stage at the PCW Show back in September,

and most impressed I was too. I still am. David Hanlon and Andrew Bailey have honed the samples and sequencing up to make a really professional package. It will take up to 26 samples and sequence them. One big bonus is that it stores its samples in IFF format which is the same as most popular dedicated samplers, so you don't need a sampler to create a sound. You could borrow or even buy a disk of sounds for any sampler using IFF and 3.5 floppies. Not to worry though, *Adrum* comes with its own drum kit. Like all music for the Amiga it only plays back four channels at any one time.

The program is protected by Access Code system for which you need the manual. When you first load up there is a page number and cross-reference code on screen. You look up the page number and code which then gives you another set of letters and figures to enter. I particularly like the instruction manual, which is very friendly and informal but takes you through the basics in a nice step-by-step fashion.

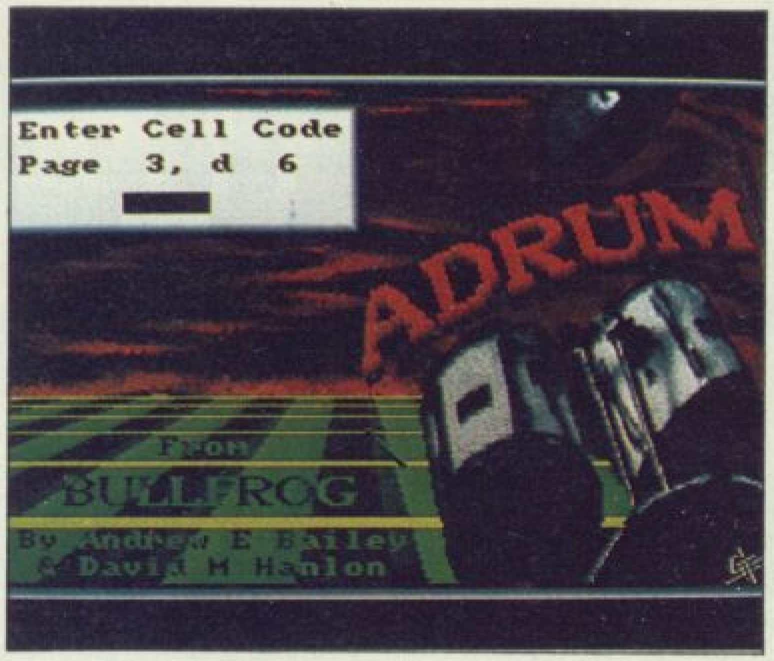
Once into the program, try the demo songs which, like all the assembled songs, are termed 'projects' (very arty!). It can be controlled by a mouse and has the usual icons that you would expect to see: tape recorder type controls, slider functions etc. The samples themselves are really excellent with some smart sounding acoustic and synth drums plus a range of percussion instruments that even includes a gong. Not a suspicion of a hiss or swoosh even on samples with a one-second reverb and echo built-in.

DEFINING BEAT

It works like most drum machines by combining patterns (here called 'measures') into longer song (project) formats. It uses a left-to-right graphic display with the four lines/channels displayed simultaneously. Across the top of the screen are 26 alphabetical icons. Each one has a sample under it. As you click on the letters so the sample name and details appear in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. Patterns are entered by clicking in the display area, the letter indicating what sample is present at this point; clicking the right-hand button removes it.

Things get a little hazy when it comes to defining what is a beat, as *Adrum* uses the term 'beat' to define the smallest portion of time it will resolve to. This is confusing to read, although not to operate and work with. Sets of white dots in the bar graphs show you where the main beats and *Adrum* 'beats' occur – see what I mean? You use the word for two slightly different concepts. Time to invent a new word and not reuse an existing term.

Whole sections of patterns can be pushed and shoved around at will and sounds can be replaced whilst still retaining the original pattern. The whole project can be saved at any time with backups as well. Any sample can be altered severely and recreated to your own taste; pitch, volume and length of sample are all accessible. It will work to MIDI clock pulse, both sent and received, but you will need an Amiga MIDI interface in the serial port. You can also get *Adrum* to play and send note-on and -off information. This means effectively that you could use *Adrum* as a four-note MIDI sequencer and also get it to be a voice sample module as it will accept samples from most samplers. In short it is an excellent program and I hope it sells in truckloads. It should. Maybe a conversion to Atari would ensure vast fortunes for its designers. Buy one now.



David Hanlon and Andrew Bailey have honed Adrum **to make a really professional package.**

HOME STUDIO

The following three programs are all American and are really designed for the novice to create music in a fun sort of way.

First of these is *The Music Studio* from **Activision**. It is available for the Atari ST and Amiga with only one or two differences between the versions. The basic principle is that you can compose, edit and store both music and lyrics. You can also design and create sounds and store those as well. The features are many and quite comprehensive; a sort of jack-of-all-trades, master at none but not bad to get you going.

The program has five screen displays.

1) The main composing screen.
This uses traditional music notation; you place notes on the stave by dragging them from a drop-out menu. As you move up and down the stave it sounds the pitch of the note. All well and good. The Amiga has four sound channels, the ST has three, and each channel have a different colour, which makes distinguishing them on the screen quite easy. You can only enter the number of simultaneous notes that the sound chip will play. However if you have the MIDI option open to you it is possible to increase that to 15 notes. Most note values are catered for, but it will only be as presentable and accurate as your hand and eye allows. In short it doesn't appear to do automatic note spacing, add beams to the tops of notes, or insert bar lines for you, although it does automatic transposition from key to key. One good idea is that you can respace the staves and add lyrics for your song. It prints the song out as a set of screen dumps to any compatible printer. Certainly okay for fun and reference but not for serious Desk Top Music Publishing. There again, it isn't designed with that in mind.

2) The sound design screen.
This shows you a graph of the sound. Here the Amiga scores markedly over the ST. All the sounds are generated by the internal chip – no sampling here – and as we all know the ST's sound chip is none too clever, in fact it is pretty hopeless by today's standards. Whereas the Amiga lets you design pretty good sounds with some fancy harmonics, adding and enhancing where necessary just like real synthesisers, the ST only produces sounds like those found on the BBC, Spectrum 128, Amstrad, etc. Both chips allow you to shape the sound – known as the sound envelope – and the graphic display of the envelope alters as you increase or decrease the value of each parameter. The pitch can be changed and vibrato added.

3) The file menu screen.
Simply a display for saving and loading songs and sounds plus all disk and printer operations.

4) Music paintbox.
Not a totally original idea, but if you ain't got a clue about the dots in real notation then try this. It drops notes on a conventional stave as a set of rectangles which are longer or shorter, depending on the duration of the note. Like the conventional notations screen, the sounds are selected and allotted colours for each channel. Again, the alignment depends on your accuracy with hand and eye. One neat touch is that it converts to standard notation, so if you flip to the ordinary notation screen your rectangles appear as real notes.

5) MIDI page.
Each internal sound can be assigned a channel and a note range for a MIDI keyboard. Quite well thought through this, as it means that you can be a little bit more flexible with your tune writing and have any MIDI instrument(s) play within certain ranges – a reasonable sequencing feature. Notes can be also entered from a MIDI keyboard but only in step-time, you still have to have an idea of note duration. It works this option on the Amiga as well, but of course you do need an interface. Voices can also be renamed to refer to the voices contained in whatever synth you are using. There is a solo feature here which lets you isolate one or more tracks if you only wish to hear these as you are working on them. It allows you to superimpose notes on top of one another when they are on different tracks without erasing anything; both notes sound on the synthesisers provided of course the notes are assigned to different channels.

Generally not a bad program and it gets a thumbs up as a painless and versatile introduction to music making. One slight niggle is that it only runs on a medium resolution screen.

JUST ADD VOLUME

Very similar in approach is the *Music Construction Set* for the ST from

Electronic Arts. Minor differences are that there is no graphics notation page, but you do have a miniature piano keyboard under the stave which highlights the notes you are entering or playing. It aligns notes for you but doesn't add bar lines automatically. It works on the first three MIDI channels, transmitting note information only and refusing to send any transpositions. The waveform editing is a little more detailed though. In direct comparison it's swings and roundabouts with perhaps the *Music Studio* having the edge.

Finally, the Amiga has rather interesting concept called *Instant Music*, again from **Electronic Arts**. It uses a very well defined graphic score with different colours for each channel. The sound libraries are sampled and the program reads other sound samples if they are in IFF format. What is unique about *Instant Music* is that you can get started immediately and use a feature called Mousejam – you select an instrument for the mouse to play and as the music plays and scrolls you can play along with it by moving the mouse in the display area thus going up and down in pitch. Some clever programming enables the Amiga to play notes that are compatible with whatever piece is being played.

The Music Studio – **a sort of jack-of-all-trades, master at none but not bad to get you going.**

The excellent visual display gives lots and lots of possibilities to literally paint music; filling in blocks of sound which turn into notes. A one-octave keyboard can be brought up to give you a rough guide as to the pitch of the note when editing – voices can be swapped over and you can even take the outline of pitch and rhythm from one song and superimpose your own crazy variation on the original.

The comprehensive editing is from the cut, paste, and copy school. Although it doesn't support or use traditional notation, if you are an Amiga owner and musical novice, then I recommend this program to you as it is fun to use, easy and sounds good. It can get more complex: eg you can add chords, melody, bass line and rhythm patterns, all with useful assistance from some smart programming if you want it. This is what makes *Instant Music* unique, the intelligent way it interprets the gist of the music and lets you more or less mess around with the sounds and notes but always producing something pleasing to the ear.

One last comment about the American programs in general; they are adept at writing manuals and packaging. I can cope with the blurb, laid-back, cool and superlatives – at least you feel you have bought a professionally produced product and not a xeroxed parish magazine.

The Amiga has rather interesting concept called Instant Music **from Electronic Arts.**

Next month more music utilities and a guide to terminology – honest – and as ever I look forward to your letters on anything relative to this column.

Programs covered this month
Drum Studio Robtek £39.95
Adrum Bullfrog – price unknown
The Music Studio Activision £34.99
Music Construction Kit Electronic Arts £24.95
Instant Music Electronic Arts £24.95
(also for C 64 £9.95 cassette and £14.95 disk)

COMPETITION WINNERS

SMASH IT UP WITH HEWSON

In TGM003, we asked you to identify four Hewson games screens, which were 1) Southern Belle, 2) Nebulus, 3) Pyracurse, 4) Quazatron. The winner receives a PHILLIPS PORTABLE CD RADIO CASSETTE PLAYER, plus Hewson's great six-game arcade compilation tape. And that all goes to **Sam Leng, Hants PO16 0EL**

A further 50 runners up each receive a copy of the compilation, and they are:

Matthew Alexander, Shropshire SY8 5LY; W Hayes, N Devon EX38 8BY; M Stevenson, Manchester M28 5NX; Kevin Clements, Edinburgh EH5 3PE; David Fox, Sheffield SI8 5DR; Scott McGlashan, Glasgow G44 4RT; Richard Wilkinson, Surrey GU24 9HB; Neil Robinson, W Yorkshire HX2 8JD; Timothy Jones, Staffordshire ST15 8DW; J Barayev, London N16 6NJ; Howard Thorpe, Southampton SO1 8ZX; Greg Wells, Essex SS6 8PB; Darren Harper, Bolton BL4 9RH; Stephen Morrell, N Yorkshire HG1 3EJ; Chris Buxton, Bristol BS18 1LX; Peter Evans, Scotland EH53 0DX; Martin Ryder, Leics, LE13 0BH; Tamas Kucsma, London NW8 6RG; Chris Kaye, Wirral L62 3NQ; Peter Taylor, Essex CO3 5BJ; Peter Warren, Bucks SL1 8BT; Gary Marr, Sheffield S5 8RP; Richard McCulloch, Cleveland TS22 5BQ; JK Marston, Dorset BH22 9RH; Mark Schofield, Nottingham NG2 7LF; Kevin Degville, Oxon OX10 0JE; Nicholas Henstock, S Yorks S61 2UJ; Philip Corrigan, S Humbs DN33 2DH; Adam Cousins, Berks RG11 1HR; Scott Heary, Midlothian EH26 9BB; Richard McLoughlin, Merseyside L31 7BE; M Fraser, Middx TW1 4RG; D Orosun, Staffs ST1 3DD; Thomas Barns, W Sussex PO21 1DQ; Paul Sheward, Shropshire SY2 5UE; Sam Lord, S Yorks DN5 8HZ; S Rafferty, Scotland PA10 2HQ; Dean McQuade, W Midlands B67 7PJ; Michael Pini, Essex SS13 2AH; Graham Roberts, Cheshire L64 0TQ; Jason Mann, Herts WD6 4TF; Michael Filippidis, Llandaff, Cardiff; RJ Merricks, Kent CT21 4NS; Lee Renney, Tyne & Wear DH4 5QN; Thomas Stracey, Worcs WR10 3BL; Nicholas Allott, Northumberland, NE61 2SQ; David Kenning, Kent CT10 1BN; Phil M Fear, Bristol BS18 2EZ; Kwai Ku, Cheshire CW1 2AS; Gary Hill, Bucks HP14 4LX

TERRAMEX GRAND SLAM ENTERTAINMENT

In order to win some essential ingredients in TGM003, you had to answer five questions related to objects used in *Terramex*. The answers are: 1) cork and leather, 2) Hoover – as in Edgar J Hoover and vacuum – 3) Mary Poppins, 4) Boston, 5) Fox-Talbot. The winner gets a: cricket ball, mini- hoover (for cleaning keyboards), umbrella, cup of tea (mug and teabags), flash gun, barrel of beer (6-pack), uni-cycle and a 'silver' coin. And the person with the large cupboard is **TG Morris, Herts WD2 1HH.**

Twelve runners up each receive a copy of *Terramex*, and they are:

Andrew Norreys, Derby DE6 4GX; Jon Rose, W Sussex PO21 3JZ; John Shaw, Cheshire SK16 4NB; Brain Sherry, Essex SS15 5NG; David Herron, W Midlands CV6 7HZ; T Harston, Cleveland TS12 2ND; Adam Wernyss, Bedfordshire SG19 1HJ; Keith R Hamilton, Glasgow G76 7XT; Marcus Cooper, Bromsgrove B61 0AN; Jim French, Essex CM12 0UH; Henry Fox-Talbot (?!), Kent BR8 7UB; Simon Croft-Baker, S Glamorgan, CF7 7RG

PORSCHE COMPETITION ELECTRONIC ARTS

To celebrate the launch of Electronic Arts's *Test Drive* in TGM003, we had a model RADIO-CONTROLLED PORSCHE 911 TURBO for the winner, and a model. RADIO-CONTROLLED PORSCHE 959 for the second place, with copies of the game for the runners up. You had to answer seven questions – answers: 1) Aston Martin DB6, 2) Genevieve, 3) Mini Cooper, 4) Juha Kankkunen, 5) Supercar, 6) Gran Turismo, 7) name of the Italian designer who designed the Mini series and recent Ford ranges among others. And the winner is P Scott, Surrey GU15 2SP, with **Howard Thorpe, Southampton SO1 8AX** in second place. The runners up are:

James Brown, Cheshire WA6 6QB; L Shanks, Surrey GU15 2SP; Chris Garbutt, Essex SS13 1RR; Mark Formby, W Sussex PO20 0DL; B Wetherstone, Kent DA13 0SH; Andrew Learoyd, Leeds LS13 4EH; Gary Marr, Sheffield S5 8RP; SC Dawkins, Leicestershire LE15 9RR; Paul McKean, Glasgow G15 6QU; David Rose, Glos GL3 4PD; Mark Fletcher, Glasgow G42 9DR; Alistair May, Scotland IV30 1QT

UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

From the man who has everything, to you, poor dear reader, a small gift to brighten your day . . . Once again, nice Mel Croucher has racked his brains on the torture machine of obscurity and little known facts to provide you with a quiz of trivial proportion. As everyone is getting so good at reading upside down, from next month we will be printing the answers back to front instead . . .

1) Which high-rise band charted with *Micro Kids* in 1983?

2) The term 'Baud Rate' is derived from **a)** the time taken to fall asleep during an adventure game, **b)** Monsieur JME Baudot, the French telegrapher, **c)** the fact that programmers are as thick as a plank, and paid accordingly

3) True or false? US Gold supremo Geoff Brown used to be in a rock'n'roll Band

4) Who made the original recording of *Tracks Of My Tears* as featured on Ocean's *Platoon*, and in what year was it recorded?

5) How are negroes depicted in Grand Slam's current *Terramex*? **a)** as Lewisham bus drivers, **b)** as cannibals with bones through their noses, **c)** as chartered accountants

6) Where do you take Amiga software infected by the 'Virus'?

7) In which hi-tech fantasies did the following characters appear; Rick Deckard, Flynn, Bomb 20, Dave Bowman?

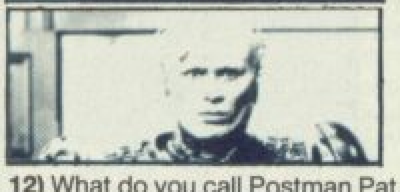
8) Which word connects 'Frenzy', 'Manager' and 'Director'?

9) When should everyone who holds computerised data on individuals have registered under the Data Protection Act, and why?

10) What is the name of the Home Office legal matrix enquiry system computer, used by the police to gather information on serious crime?

11) What is the only difference between these pictures of Martech boss David Martin and Robocop?





12) What do you call Postman Pat on the dole?

13) The *International Encyclopedia Of Education* has just been released. How much shelf space does it take up, and what does it cost? **a)** 3 inches for £11, **b)** 36 inches for £110, **c)** 1/4 inch for £1,100

14) What is the difference between L Ron Hubbard and Rob Hubbard?



15) What does the acronym ASCII stand for?

16) How many computers purchased in the UK are imports, in any particular year?

17) Which defunct computers appear in 'TAPER JUICE', 'I NEED, O GIVE' and 'GOD RAN'

18) Translate 0110,0011 from the binary

19) How many behavioural psychologists does it take to change a floppy disk?

20) Is 'Gee Bee Air Rally' **a)** a 3-D racing simulation by Steve Cartwright, **b)** a rock festival starring three castrated Australian brothers, **c)** the smell you get during a mugging?

ANSWERS

1) Level 42
2) b) Monsieur JME Baudot, 1841-1903, who would have invented the Bidet give or take a few letters
3) TRUE of course. EVERYBODY of his generation used to be in a rock'n'roll band
4) Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, 1969
5) b) Cannibals with bones through their noses, Grand Slam 'entertainments' 01-439 0666
6) The VDU Clinic
7) *Bladerunner, Tron, Dark Star, 2001 A Space Odyssey*
8) Football or Maxwell
9) November 11th 1987; search me
10) HOLMES, of course
11) Robocop is still wearing his Walkman
12) Pat
13) c) 1/4 inch for £1,100 plus VAT. An entire library held on one compact disc
14) L Ron Hubbard is a looney, whereas Rob Hubbard is too
15) American Standard Code for Information Interchange
16) None, the particular year is 1066
17) Jupiter Ace, Video Genie and Dragon
18) 63
19) One, but it's really got to want to change
20) Yes

NEXT MONTH

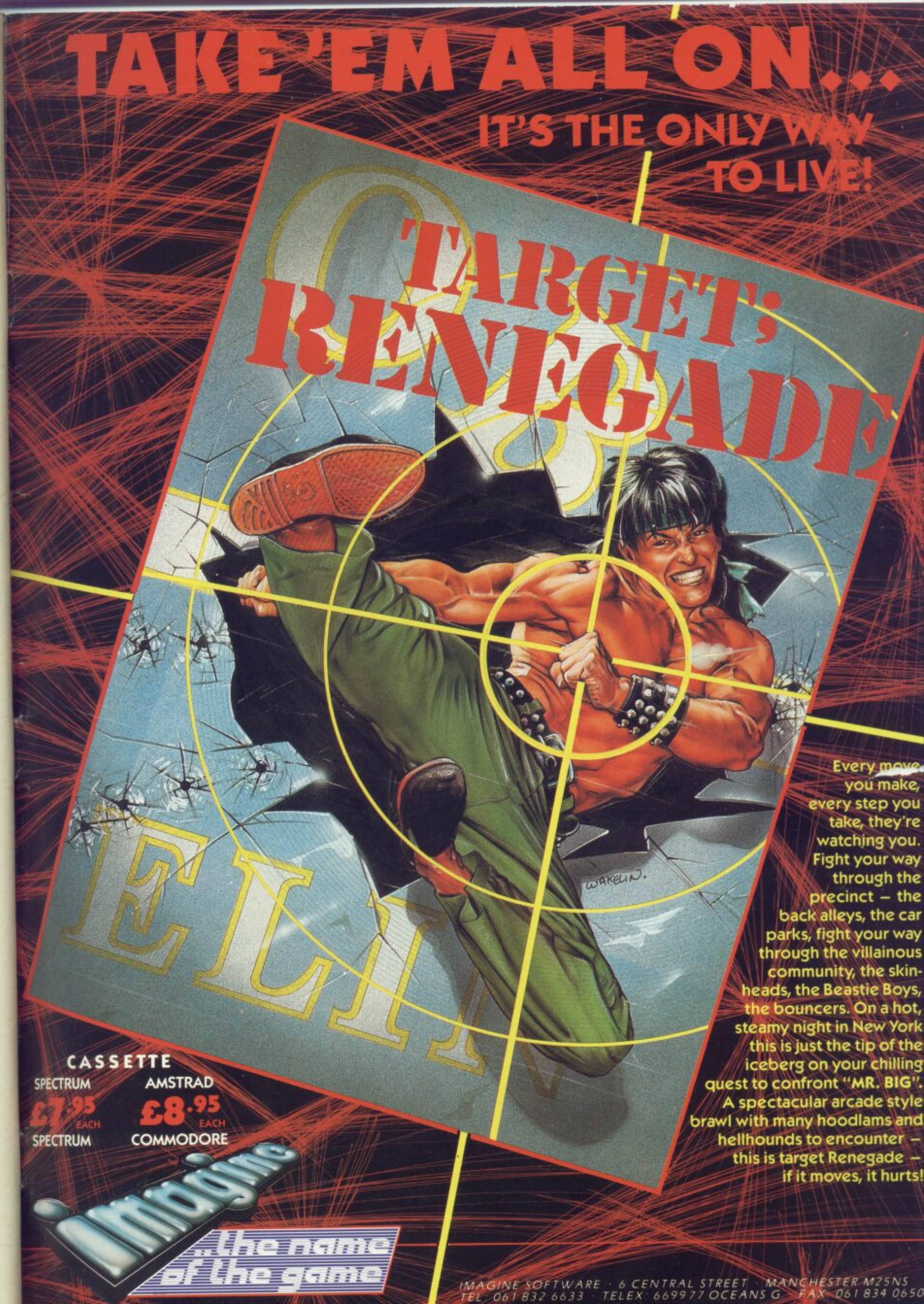
BULLETIN 1000 THE VIDEO

At last, THE GAMES MACHINE gets into the offices of the people who create the software promo–videos we all stare at in J Menzies and WH Smith. How are these promotions created? Who decides the order of the ads? Do they sell games? TGM006 has got it taped!

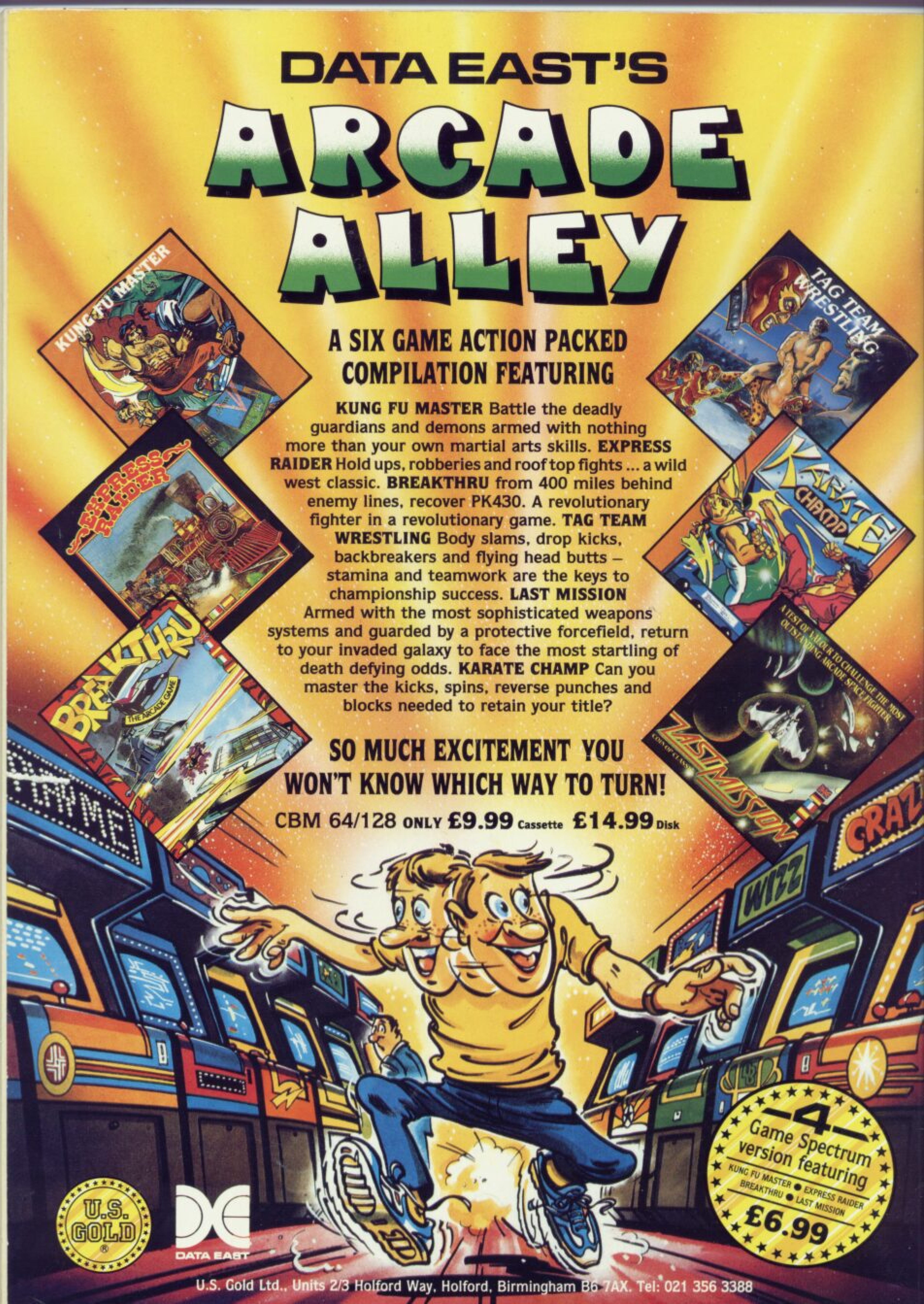
- Mel Croucher proves how determined he is to be included in THE GAMES MACHINE. There's Mercy Dash (lovingly inked by Robin Evans), a look at the opening of the airwaves by the Government to the public – will this mean a Tony Blackburn clone in every street? Mel has cajoled his way into **Computer Arena 88** – the computer industry conference held in Jersey March 11-13, and he will be reporting his findings on how some of the best-known softpersonalities began their working lives.
- John Gilbert continues his look at Techno Toys, interactive TV/video and reports further on his findings at the 1988 Toy Fair.
- Vivacious virtuoso Jon Bates casts a lilting look at a 64 track sequencer and a professional sound designer program.
- PLUS all the usuals; RPGs with John Woods, adventure with Rob Steel, Coin–Op Confrontation courtesy of Robin Hogg, competitions (don't forget the Amiga and monitor to be won) and all the latest multi-format games reviews, previews and boardgames.
- Issue Six of THE GAMES MACHINE hits the streets on April 21, be there!

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